

THE MYSTERY OF MIRIAM

J. WESLEY JOHNSTON





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THE MYSTERY *of* Miriam

By J. WESLEY JOHNSTON

*Author of "Dwellers in Gotham,"
"The Riddle of Life," etc.*



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To
EVELYN, HAROLD & GRACE;
these three;
but the greatest of these is
Elinor

NEW YORK, U.S.A.

2228380

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BOOK I.
MIRIAM

THE MYSTERY OF MIRIAM

I.

MR. SAXBY AT HOME

AT a given hour every morning, with a punctuality almost unvarying, the well-appointed carriage of Mr. Gaston Saxby appeared at the door of his house in Pelham, and, almost before the horses came to a stand-still, Mr. Saxby would walk down the broad stone steps, take his place in the carriage, and drive off to the railway station.

So regular were these movements on the part of Mr. Saxby, that in time they came to be regarded as an established custom, any break causing both wonder and inquiry. It was, therefore, with no little surprise that the neighbors saw the carriage depart one morning without its usual occupant, and, after a time, return from the station as empty as when it started.

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Something evidently was wrong, — what, no one could tell. Mr. Saxby had been seen the evening before with Mrs. Saxby and their daughter Miriam, returning from New York, so business men, on their way to the station, as they saw the empty carriage, questioned each other as to what it meant. On the train various inquiries were made, some even asking the conductor what had become of his most regular passenger.

What puzzled all of them was the fact that the empty carriage had gone that morning to the station, and, after waiting there for the train from New York, had driven off without any one opening its door, or the coachman leaving his seat. Some thought that Mr. Saxby had been overworking of late and was taking a day off; others were of opinion that he was expecting certain Western capitalists, with whom he was suspected of being in treaty; while others only shrugged their shoulders, as though the matter did not especially concern them. But soon other topics of conversation presented themselves, and for the time Mr. Saxby and his empty carriage were forgotten.

In the meantime, Mr. Saxby was in his library, impatiently waiting the return of the carriage from the station, for he was expecting the arrival of his secretary to assist him in examining a number of very important documents, a task

for which he preferred the quiet of his suburban home.

Something in these documents, or relating to them, troubled Mr. Saxby. One would have thought that any man might be measurably content in such a home, and particularly in the luxuriously furnished room where he was sitting. A fire burned cheerfully in the open grate, diffusing its pleasant warmth and softening the chill of the early November day. Rich hangings of Oriental design and color tempered the light that filled the spacious windows. The walls and ceilings, of sombre hue, suggested the work of a genuine artist. Bookcases of dark mahogany, which not only held costly and tempting editions, but served as a resting-place for rare bronzes and costly bric-à-brac, occupied two sides of the library. Over the mantelpiece, which was also of mahogany and handsomely carved, hung a genuine Velasquez, for which Mr. Saxby had paid a small fortune. An exquisite Persian rug almost covered the entire floor, leaving just margin enough to reveal the polished hard wood, which shone in the glancing fire-light.

The table on which Mr. Saxby's hand rested was severe but massive, and, though partially covered with books and papers, it had ample accommodations for as many more. So far as surroundings were concerned, Mr. Saxby had

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no cause to be restless, and much less to be irritable.

As he rose hastily from his chair and walked impatiently to the window, it was evident that he was hale and vigorous. He appeared a little heavy under the eyes — not an uncommon thing with men who live in the atmosphere of Wall Street — and his neck was somewhat large for a man of his build. His hair had hardly a tinge of gray, his eyes were wonderfully clear, his square shoulders were well thrown back, and every movement indicated alertness and power. He looked masterful, resolute, as if accustomed to battle with his fellows, — a man who asked no quarter, extended no mercy, and never sent a flag of truce or acknowledged defeat. Proud, resourceful, with ambitions all his own, marvelously successful in most of his undertakings, Mr. Saxby had good reason to expect and even demand much from the years that yet awaited him.

Not far from fifty, with a body which he could afford at times to work as a galley-slave; a mind not only singularly active but capable of enduring prolonged strain; ample means to carry out either purpose or whim, Mr. Saxby was a force to be reckoned with by both friends and foes.

Glancing sharply from the library window, he saw the carriage turning the bend of the road;

then he went back to the table, and, taking up what seemed to be a legal document, he opened a drawer and placed it with some other papers, evidently a private collection intended only for his own use. This done, he locked the drawer with a key of peculiar design selected from a small bunch which he carried in an inner pocket. Having replaced the keys, he was about to sit down again at the table when some one tapped gently on the library door.

"Come in," Mr. Saxby said, pleasantly, and was just about to add "Good morning, Mr. Walters," when he saw that it was not his secretary who entered, but the hall servant, with a message from the coachman to the effect that Mr. Walters had not come on the morning train.

"Tell Cooney I wish to see him," Mr. Saxby replied as pleasantly as before, for he had learned the value of keeping his voice under perfect control. Hence he rarely spoke except in a certain tone, low, calm, distinct, but with a peculiar quality which carried the precise meaning he intended to convey.

"Were you at the station in time for the train?" he asked Cooney, who had been his coachman for some years.

"Yes, sir, and waited nearly ten minutes," Cooney answered, respectfully, his speech suggesting the delicious accent of the County Cork.

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"Did you see any passengers get off here?"

"Only three came by that train, sir, — Mr. Dady the grocer, and two painters who are working on a house down the street."

"You would know Mr. Walters if you saw him?"

"Yes, sir, sure; I have met him two or three times at the station and taken him back again."

"That will do, Cooney," Mr. Saxby said, resuming his chair and drawing it up closer to the table.

Something surely had gone amiss with Mr. Walters. Never before had Mr. Saxby known him to miss an appointment. Careful, methodical, regular, with a genius for punctuality, Mr. Walters was indeed a model secretary. So complete was Mr. Saxby's confidence in the ability and integrity of his secretary that he rarely troubled himself with his most important letters after dictating them, assured that in Mr. Walters's hands they were beyond question.

While wondering as to the cause of Mr. Walters's non-appearance, the telephone bell rang in his library, and, going to the wire, Mr. Saxby recognized the voice of Mr. Crewe, his office manager.

"We have just heard from Mr. Walters," the office manager said; "he got hurt at the Brooklyn Bridge this morning, and was taken to a hospital up-town. A telephone message from the

hospital says that he is not seriously injured, but won't be able to come to the office for some weeks."

"Send up at once and see that everything is done to make him comfortable. Also send a message to his people in Brooklyn, telling them to engage a private room for him at the hospital, and to spare no expense," Mr. Saxby replied, promptly. Then he added: "Have Mr. Bedford come to the 'phone." For a few moments there was silence, Mr. Saxby standing meantime holding the receiver to his ear, then, "I am at the telephone, Mr. Saxby," informed him that Mr. Bedford was waiting to receive his commands. "Mr. Bedford, I wish you to assist me with some special correspondence. Take the ten-thirty train for Pelham, a carriage will meet you at the station. You may have to remain here overnight. Arrange to do so in case it is necessary."

Some of Paul Bedford's fellow clerks were at first a little envious when it became known in the office that he was going to Pelham, and might remain at Mr. Saxby's for the night. Only Mr. Crewe and Mr. Walters had thus far been so favored; the one because of his position as confidential manager, the other in his capacity as private secretary. While little was known in the office of Mr. Saxby's home, it was naturally assumed that a man of his wealth would house

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himself in becoming style and maintain a state which he could amply afford.

The first feeling of envy, however, on account of Paul Bedford's good fortune, soon wore away. He was a general favorite in the office, having qualities that made him very popular. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, deep enough in color to pass for a Spaniard or Italian, he was also tall and athletic in build, and fully as handsome as a man has a right to be. He had also other endowments that added to his value, both socially and otherwise. Without the least assumption, though not unconsciously, he carried his pleasant burden of twenty-four years just as every strong, handsome young fellow should. Maidens of various degrees smiled upon him approvingly, and he, it must be said, smiled in return, but, as his were smiles in the abstract, no great harm was done. Somewhere in his veins was a dreamy, poetic tinge, which might shade off into romance or deepen into tragedy, as the fates pleased to decide.

Soon after receiving Mr. Saxby's message, Paul Bedford left the office on Wall Street. In half an hour he was at the Grand Central Station, and before noon was hard at work in Mr. Saxby's library at Pelham.

II.

MIRIAM

BEFORE the day was half spent, Paul Bedford surprised Mr. Saxby at the ease with which he filled his new and difficult position. At first there were matters comparatively simple, — letters, statements, general correspondence, — all of which involved no special labor. But as Mr. Saxby noted how quickly Paul received his most rapid dictation, his prompt recognition of facts and details, and his ability to follow him without elaborate explanations, he took up the more serious business of the day, for which he had summoned Mr. Walters. Contracts were studied, proposals examined, calculations made and compared, immense purchases ordered, and young Bedford saw for the first time some of the mental processes by which Mr. Saxby accomplished his work.

That any one man could be the moving force of such varied and complicated interests seemed impossible. To Mr. Saxby the world was merely a chess-board, and he played on States and king-

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doms as on so many squares. He moved mountains of coal or iron like pawns in the game. Statesmen and rulers were but as pieces in his hand to be disposed as best suited his purpose. With unerring strategy he marshalled his forces in such order as to make his defence complete, and the attack overwhelming.

But what seemed to Paul even more wonderful was the eagerness, the zeal, the spirit of battle which possessed Mr. Saxby. His eyes shone. His voice was electric with intensity. The air of the library was as if charged with some dominating force which must bear down all that would oppose it. Paul knew nothing of the men who had combined to thwart Mr. Saxby, and, if possible, compass his ruin, save from vague rumors on the street, yet he felt as if the day of reckoning had come and a terrible revenge was at hand. Keenly sensitive, Mr. Saxby's mesmeric excitement soon began to tell on Paul, and ere long he had the spirit of a young soldier following close upon a daring leader, reckless of everything save the victory which must be won.

"We will rest now," Mr. Saxby said, leaning back in his chair, "and I think a cup of coffee would not be amiss."

Without waiting for Paul to reply, he touched an electric bell, and in a few moments a servant entered with a tray, upon which were the essentials of a substantial lunch.

"You smoke, of course," Mr. Saxby said, when the coffee stage had been reached, producing from a drawer in the table a box of cigars. "I think you will find these fairly good," he continued, opening the box and passing it to Paul.

Paul did not know that Mr. Saxby had never once offered a cigar to Mr. Walters. Had he been aware of that fact he would probably have declined the proffered courtesy, but he took a cigar with some hesitation.

For a few minutes both men smoked in silence, Paul respectfully waiting for Mr. Saxby to speak.

After a time he asked abruptly:

"Where did you learn to write shorthand?"

"At college," Paul answered.

"Yes, to be sure. Notes of lectures and things of that kind."

"No, though I found it useful in that way, but to help me through."

"In what way?"

"By newspaper work, writing for some of the cheaper magazines, and occasionally doing something a little better."

"For extra spending-money, I suppose?"

This question was accompanied by a look of deeper interest than Mr. Saxby had given before.

"For all the money I needed," Paul answered, bravely, though with a slight flush.

"Yale or Harvard?"

"Syracuse."

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"I remember now that Mr. Crewe said you were from the upper part of the State. Were you born there?"

"I am a Virginian," Paul said, quietly. Nevertheless a degree of pride worked itself into his voice, for the Virginian has yet to be born who does not glory in his native State.

Mr. Saxby could easily fill in the outline suggested by Paul's replies. And a glance at Paul himself would enable him the more readily to complete the picture. True, he could not recall the years of war, when Virginia shed its richest blood in espousal of the Confederacy; when Richmond from its capitol held aloft the flag for which so many had battled to the death; neither could he remember the terrible days of disappointment, defeat, disaster, the humiliation of surrender, the return of the broken-hearted warriors only to find bereaved families, plantations in desolation, and with a terrible struggle in hopelessness and poverty ahead of them.

Mr. Saxby's financial interests in the South, however, gave him ample opportunity to know the real conditions there, so he could at once tell why Paul Bedford came North, why he was forced to work his way through college, and as soon as college days were over, enter at once into business, taking the first available offering he could find.

Mr. Saxby was not wont to express generous

sympathy. People who claimed to know him said he had less heart than a steam-engine, for an engine cylinder does get warm at times. Nevertheless, he admired grit, and wherever he found a man who had courage enough to fight his way out, he recognized in him a kindred spirit. So there was something of respect in the look which he bestowed on Paul. And later, when work was resumed, he seemed to place a higher value on Paul's services, going so far, more than once, as to request an opinion from him.

"We can finish later in the evening," Mr. Saxby said, glancing at the clock. "It is almost dinner-time," and, while speaking, he touched the electric bell, which, as before, was answered with singular promptness.

"Show Mr. Bedford to his room," he said, when the servant entered, leaving at once for his own apartments.

"Dinner is served at seven," the servant replied to Paul's question, adding, in a respectful undertone: "And seven is seven with Mr. Saxby."

Paul smilingly accepted the kindly hint of the servant, and was in the parlor several minutes ahead of time. Soon Mr. Saxby came in, accompanied by Mrs. Saxby, an elaborately dressed and rather imposing personage, whose reception of Paul was somewhat chilling. That

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Paul was undeniably handsome she saw at a glance. Also that he was an aristocrat to the finger-tips, and in appearance worthy of courteous recognition in even such a home as hers. But his easy, quiet acceptance of an approach to equality was the sin unpardonable, and, as Mrs. Saxby saw young Bedford walk across the parlor with her husband to get a closer look at a Corot, of which they had been speaking, then heard him refer to the artist as if familiar with his work, she thought his presumption simply boundless. She did not know that in these moments Paul Bedford's spirit had gone back to the spirits of his fathers, and was incarnating itself in the graceful courtesy of the high-bred Southern cavalier. For the time he was no mere hireling in the service of Mr. Saxby; he was a Virginian, in whose veins throbbed the blood from which poets, orators, warriors, statesmen had come. These things of course Mrs. Saxby did not know. Nor would the knowledge of them have affected her. For hers was not a nature to be influenced by such an appeal.

"Am I late?" Paul heard, in a voice which had something of Mr. Saxby's tone, only so modulated that the question seemed a bit of exquisite melody. Eagerly Paul listened, as the voice went on: "I was detained at Mrs. Grattan's. Indeed, I could hardly get away."

"You have just saved yourself, Miriam," Mr.

Saxby said, pleasantly, then introduced Paul, who was standing beside him.

A sweet, quaint picture Miriam suggested to Paul, as, in her dinner-gown of purest white, made after the Colonial fashion, she gracefully acknowledged his courteous salutation. Not quite of medium height, she gave the impression of being taller, the result probably of a certain gravity in her look, and also a rather striking arrangement of her hair. Her face was oval, and made still more definite by dark, heavy eyebrows of more than the usual curve. Her eyes were large, and in the night looked almost black, but in reality they were deep brown, and shone with singular brilliance. She had a high, white forehead, and her hair, darker even than her eyes, was parted so that it waved almost regularly on either side, then fell to her ears, where it was caught and drawn back as in the days of long ago. This gave her face the appearance of being set in a frame wonderfully appropriate and becoming. She was pale, too much so perhaps for one of her years, for she had just turned twenty, but there was nothing fragile or delicate in her appearance.

As Paul looked at her, — his spirit yet with his ancestors, — he could see in the distant Virginian home pictures which had filled his boyish eyes, and he wondered if one of the maidens, for whose smile men would battle with each other,

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and in whose gleaming eyes lovers saw a light more glorious than ever fell on land or sea, had not escaped from its frame on the gallery wall and again appeared in flesh and blood.

If a servant had not just then solemnly announced "Dinner is served," Paul might have been tempted to indulge in reverie, but he rallied himself, and, with the dignity of one born in the purple, led Miss Saxby to the dining-room, she accepting his arm with seemingly as much willingness as though he was the proud heir of baronial halls.

From every standpoint, save that of Mrs. Saxby, the dinner-hour was really enjoyable. Mr. Saxby, having disposed of the heavier and more pressing business matters to which he had given the day, entered spiritedly into the general conversation. Miss Saxby, always finding much to interest her and having the gift of interesting others, introduced topics in which all could share. Paul, still in the realm of the illustrious sires, to whom snowy linen, shining silver, playful humor, and sparkling conversation were every-day affairs, contributed his full share to the pleasure of the hour.

Had he been awkward, ill at ease, unaccustomed to the ways of social life, and conducted himself as one in the presence of his superiors, Mrs. Saxby would have made due allowance for the young man, and pitied him, as she often did

Mr. Walters. But she was forced to concede that his deportment was irreproachable, and the concession made her angry. Nor did her anger abate one whit when she saw him draw aside the portière, that she and Miriam might pass out after dinner, with a grace of which Mr. Saxby knew nothing. A few minutes later, he rejoined the ladies in the parlor, preferring his coffee with them to a cigar with Mr. Saxby. To crown all, he talked music, art, and literature with Miriam, as if such things were matters of ordinary conversation, and he even had the audacity to ask Miss Saxby to sing!

III.

MIDNIGHT VISITORS

MUCH to Mrs. Saxby's surprise, Miriam did not resent Paul Bedford's request. Going at once to the piano, she pleasantly asked:

"What shall I sing, Mr. Bedford?"

The work of selection occupied some minutes, and naturally led to expressions of opinion, the comparison of one song with another, the merits of different composers, and their tastes, being by no means at variance, a basis of equality was easily established.

This proceeding added materially to the angry fire in Mrs. Saxby's breast. Before, she was angry only with Paul; now Miriam aroused her indignation. But what could she do? Mrs. Saxby rigidly observed the code of social obligation, and that code, for the time being, gave Paul Bedford the privileges of a guest. One thing she was certain of, — nothing would ever induce her to receive Paul Bedford in any other way than as her husband's clerk.

It was late that night when Paul went to his

room, having been detained in the library by Mr. Saxby. Under ordinary circumstances, he would have smoked his good-night pipe, and have fallen, in due time, fast asleep, for he was too young and healthy, and too poor as well, to know anything of insomnia.

The pipe was smoked and refilled again, but he never thought of sleep. The events of the day—in every way unusual and with much that was exciting—so crowded upon him as to make him only more wakeful as the night went by. No matter how his thoughts wandered or what form they took, Miss Saxby was invariably in them. He recalled the exquisite figure she made when he was introduced,—a combination of the quaint Puritan maiden and the dainty elegance of a Southern belle; he could feel the strange light flashing from her singularly expressive eyes; he remembered her bright, graceful pleasantries at the dinner-table, and the skill with which she turned aside the keen wit of Mr. Saxby. Far more grateful still was the delicious memory of the simple ballad she had sung in response to his wish.

The rings of smoke formed to his eye a fleecy frame for Miss Saxby's face, so strangely witching and winsome, even more so now than when he had seen it a few hours before. Then he began to dream, not the mere pleantry of sleep, when the mystic angels of the night unlock

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the prison house of clay, but the dream which means the opening of a new life, when the soul experiences a resurrection, when the white-robed figures of hope and ambition have rolled away the stone, and the eager, daring heart, so long entombed, feels for the first time the thrill of its own being.

In such a mood, Paul Bedford could not think of sleep, wasting the night in dull, stupid heaviness, and lose the vision which had so kindled and aroused him.

Quietly opening the window, he looked for some time at the sky, where the November stars shone like mighty diamonds, and with a glory he had never felt before.

There was no moon; the dark earth was therefore in striking contrast with the brilliant heavens. Paul's room shared this darkness, for he had turned off the lights before opening the window.

As he sat there dreaming and wondering, he was startled by hearing hoarse whispers, and then a low voice, saying:

"The other window, Bill; look out!"

Paul's first thought was that the voices were those of servants belonging to the house, who had been out at some merrymaking, and were now trying to enter their rooms without disturbing the household. Still he leaned forward and listened, so as to be certain. Soon he heard:

“What about the wire?”

“Jake took care of that.”

“When?”

“Last night.”

By this time Paul's head was well out of the window, and, though too dark to see anything clearly, he was certain that two men were working at a window in the library, one holding it to deaden the noise, the other trying to force it open with a burglar's tool.

In a moment it flashed upon him that Mr. Saxby's apartments were over the library, and, if these men were burglars and succeeded in forcing an entrance, Mr. Saxby would be at their mercy.

But what if they were servants of the house? In that case, any outcry or alarm would cause serious trouble, not only to the thoughtless merry-makers, but to others as well. Meantime Paul kept a sharp watch on that window, and his eyes, now growing accustomed to the darkness, could see more clearly than when he first looked out. Very soon he was satisfied the men were there, for he saw them noiselessly raise the window and stealthily creep into the library.

He looked intently to observe if they would shut the window after them, for then he would be certain of their connection with the Saxby household, but they left it open, as if to provide for their escape.

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And now what was the best thing to do? To rush into the hall and shout "Thieves! Fire! Murder!" thus arousing the family and servants, did not seem to Paul the wisest course. Besides, it might frighten Miss Saxby, and possibly do her serious harm. This was not to be thought of. But something must be done, and that speedily, for every moment was of value.

Fortunately, he knew the location of the library, so, with as little noise but as much haste as possible, he went down-stairs and quietly opened the library door. Here everything was dark and still as the grave. Only for the open window, through which the cool night air was blowing, he might have imagined that both eyes and ears had deceived him, — the men only shadows cast by the trees in the dim starlight, and the voices sounds exaggerated by his own fancy. But there was the window, while on the windowsill lay what felt to his hand like a coarse canvas or carpet bag, and in it several heavy iron tools.

With inborn courage, Paul groped about the library, stooping under the long wide table to feel if any one was hiding there. Then he listened, and with such intentness that even a low breath would not have escaped him, but not a sound broke the stillness, save the clock ticking on the mantelpiece. Suddenly he remembered the door Mr. Saxby had used just before dinner, and he was startled when he made his way across

the room to find this door wide open. Where it led to he knew not. Softly reaching out his hands on either side, and moving with extreme caution, Paul felt the woodwork of the door, then the walls of some hall or passageway, finally reaching the foot of a staircase. Again he listened, hardly daring to breathe, for he thought he heard sounds as of some one going up-stairs, and pausing for a moment or two on each step. Then there was a faint rustle, barely audible, yet it suggested to Paul that the men had reached the top of the stairs and were slowly moving along the upper hall. He intended creeping up these stairs, but the next moment he heard Mr. Saxby demand:

“Who is there?”

Instantly there was a rushing of feet, followed by sounds of severe struggling. Soon Paul was in the room from which the noises came, where he saw Mr. Saxby on the bed fiercely contending with two men, one of whom had caught him by the throat and was holding a sponge to his mouth and nose. As Paul dashed into the room, the burglars saw that anything by way of robbery was now impossible. The most they could do was make their escape, no matter what it cost.

Under the pretence of being painters working in an empty house not far from Mr Saxby's, they had eluded suspicion, and when Cooney, Mr. Saxby's coachman, spoke of their coming on

the morning train, it never once occurred to him that he was referring to two of the most noted burglars in New York.

With all of their preparations, they were disconcerted by finding a light in Mr. Saxby's room, though so low and shaded that little of it reached his bed. They were also surprised at the suddenness with which he detected their presence, for their movements had been almost noiseless.

But far more important than these things was the young man who rushed into the room, with a face as that of a soldier in battle, and a bearing athletic and powerful.

Nothing remained now but a fight, perhaps to the death. Like a tiger, one sprang at Paul, the other still holding Mr. Saxby down on the bed. The attack was so sudden that he staggered and almost fell, for he had barely entered the room before the burglar was upon him. But Paul speedily recovered himself. His football experiences at college, though purchased dearly, had taught him various things, some of which now proved very valuable.

By a quick twist of his body, he was able to break away from the burglar's grasp, the next moment to strike him a stinging blow square between the eyes, and then close upon him in a way only possible to a skilled wrestler.

In point of size and strength the two men were not unevenly matched, the burglar being, perhaps,

more toughened and hardened, but this was offset by Paul's greater skill and ability to handle himself. For a few seconds they stood locked in each other's arms, neither speaking a word, both determined and resolute. Paul knew that, if the burglar could get at his revolver, he would shoot to kill, for the man had murder in his face. The one was fighting for life, the other for liberty. They swayed, bent, pushed, twisted; faces near enough to feel each other's hot breath; breasts crushing against each other with awful force; the advantage one time with the burglar and then with Paul; each more determined as the fight went on; now driving one another across the room, then back again to where they started. At last the burglar's foot slipped, which gave Paul a chance to use another of his football tricks, and enabled him to throw the thief, who fell heavily to the floor, striking his head against a sharp corner of the brass fender, over which they had both stumbled in their fearful struggle.

Quick as lightning, Paul snatched the revolver from the burglar's pocket, and held it over him, prepared to shoot if he attempted to rise.

The fight between Mr. Saxby and his assailant was less exciting but equally fierce, the burglar's one purpose being to hold the chloroformed sponge against Mr. Saxby's face long enough to compel unconsciousness, and then hasten to the help of his confederate. This he was unable to

do, Mr. Saxby beating off the burglar's hand again and again, finally flinging his arms around the ruffian's neck, and holding him in such a way that he was powerless. Vainly the fellow tried to get away, and, being a big, burly man of great strength, he dragged Mr. Saxby from the bed and almost to the door. Seeing that he could not escape in any other way, he drew his revolver and fired, first at Mr. Saxby, inflicting an ugly wound, then at Paul, who fired in return. Making a rush for the stairs, he escaped by the library window. The whole house was soon in an uproar. The noise of the shooting awoke every one; servants were running here and there, shouting and screaming at the top of their voices.

Mrs. Saxby came rushing to her husband's room, and, seeing Paul with a smoking revolver in his hand, and Mr. Saxby lying on the floor in a pool of blood, imagined that there had been a fearful quarrel, which had ended in murder. When Miriam came in, though startled and trembling, she saw the man over whom Paul was holding the revolver and immediately understood the situation. Paul's clothes were sadly torn, his face covered with dirt and blood, and his look set and fierce, yet to her he seemed more handsome than a Greek god.

"Miss Saxby," he said, but without changing his position or altering the direction of the re-

volver, "send at once for the nearest doctor, also for the police, or telephone if you can."

Then to the servants he said: "Bring me a piece of rope, clothes-line, anything you can find."

There was no need of the rope when brought, for the wretch was so stunned by his fall that the police, who promptly answered the telephone call, had to have a stretcher to carry him to the station.

Doctor Barrington, the family physician of the Saxbys, was not long in responding to Miss Saxby's appeal. After such an examination as was possible under the circumstances, he said Mr. Saxby's wound, while painful, was not serious, and that he would be all right again in a few weeks. At Mrs. Saxby's urgent request, he consented to remain all night, but assured her there was no cause for special anxiety.

As Paul had given a general statement of matters to the police, and, having no desire to play the part of hero, he availed himself of the first opportunity of quietly retiring to his room, and, strange to say, was soon fast asleep.

IV.

AN EVENTFUL NIGHT

IT was most fortunate, so far as Mr. Saxby's business interests were concerned, that Paul Bedford had been called to Pelham before the encounter with the burglars, otherwise much confusion and serious financial loss would have resulted. For though, according to Doctor Barrington, the wound was not serious, it kept Mr. Saxby in bed for several weeks, and sadly interfered with many of his plans. To a man of his temperament, this was a grievous affliction, but he resolved to keep up with affairs at the office. Paul Bedford was therefore installed for the time as private secretary, going to Mr. Saxby's room every morning to receive directions for the day's business, and in the evening making a report, besides bringing from the office letters and telegrams of special importance. Under this arrangement, it was decided that Paul should remain overnight at Pelham, as it allowed more time for consultation with Mr. Saxby, and kept him in closer touch with office matters. This was

most essential, as two or three combinations, involving vast capital and requiring delicate management, were in progress, and any mishap would not only result in the loss of their control, but also give his rivals an opportunity of costly revenge.

Mr. Saxby had rivals, dangerous, daring, resolute, and the fact that he was stretched on a bed, plastered and bandaged and almost helpless, made no appeal to their sense of chivalry.

Paul Bedford was of inestimable value at this juncture in Mr. Saxby's affairs. With a tact amazing in one so young, he carried out Mr. Saxby's wishes, and brought to a successful issue some complicated and serious commissions. More than once he was compelled to act on his own responsibility, Mr. Crewe flatly refusing to share any obligations.

"I wouldn't do it, Bedford. If the thing doesn't go through, there will be the devil to pay, and in this case the pay will be pretty steep," said Mr. Crewe one day when Wall Street was full of rumors and things were much unsettled.

"If Mr. Saxby were here, he would do it," Paul answered, confidently.

"And I think it is the right thing to do, although there is a chance for a big loss," was the reply of Mr. Crewe.

"Unless something is done, Mr. Saxby's interests are liable to be affected," Paul said.

"Why not wire him?"

"There isn't time. Besides, one can't explain things over the wire."

"Then do as you please, but don't blame me if anything happens."

That evening Paul told Mr. Saxby what he had done, giving him his reasons for doing it.

At first Mr. Saxby's eyes had a gleam of displeasure, as if he resented this assumption of authority, but, as Paul went on, a grim smile gathered on his lips, and finally he laughed under his breath.

"I don't wonder at Mr. Crewe declining such a serious responsibility," he said, "yet your course has my hearty approval."

Well it might. In buying up, through Mr. Saxby's brokers, three or four large blocks of stock which were thrown on the market, Paul stopped what was intended as a raid, thus frustrating the plans of a powerful syndicate, who thought the Saxby interests were at their mercy. Not content with this, by a stroke of daring only possible to reckless youth, he so followed up his advantage as to turn a threatened loss into a substantial gain.

In thinking the matter over when Paul had gone to dress for dinner, Mr. Saxby could not but admire the strategy, the shrewdness, and at the same time the courage of the young secretary.

"Bedford is proving himself a most useful

fellow," he said one evening to Mrs. Saxby, who was in his room after Paul had returned from the office with a general outline of the day's proceedings.

Mrs. Saxby's only reply was a slight elevation of her eyebrows, and an inquiring look at her husband.

"He is certainly one of the most capable young men I know," Mr. Saxby continued, taking up the memoranda Paul had left, and looking them over.

"Is he not just a little presuming for one in his position?" Mrs. Saxby asked, the elevation of her eyebrows contriving somehow to get into her voice.

"I hadn't noticed anything of that kind," Mr. Saxby replied, going on with his examination of the papers.

"Very likely, but I have," and Mrs. Saxby so placed the emphasis as to make it very effective.

"In what way?" Mr. Saxby now put the papers down and looked across the room at his wife, who was sitting in an easy-chair by the window.

"His air, manner, and general assumption of equality," she answered. "One would think by his bearing that he was a person of dignity and wealth. He talks to Miriam about music and art, everything, in fact, in the most familiar way.

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I wonder sometimes that she allows him to do so. Mr. Crewe, though he is your manager, and has been with you for a number of years, wouldn't dare to say or do the things that Mr. Bedford will. To speak plainly, Gaston, he often makes me very angry."

It was indeed most evident from Mrs. Saxby's tone that she thoroughly disapproved of Paul Bedford, and that not even his services, valuable as they were, compensated for his presence in her household.

And it cannot be denied that Mrs. Saxby had some grounds for complaint, not, however, so much against Paul, as with the course that matters were taking. During the first weeks after Mr. Saxby's encounter with the burglars, when he required attention, nursing, and care, all outside engagements of the family were cancelled, and only intimate friends permitted to call. Naturally much of Mrs. Saxby's time was spent in her husband's room, particularly in the evening after Paul had made his daily report. She would then read to him an essay of Emerson, or a chapter from Ruskin, or a few pages from "The Newcomes," a story of which Mr. Saxby was never weary. Mr. Saxby's taste in literature was high, higher considerably than that of his wife, for she thought "The Newcomes" a bore, and understood little of either Emerson or Ruskin. Still, having a clear voice, and being by no means a

bad reader, she faithfully performed this wifely duty.

Under these circumstances, Miriam and Paul were left to entertain themselves, a proceeding by no means either difficult or disagreeable. After dinner they would go to the parlor, where they would chat for awhile, invariably finding topics of mutual interest. Then Miriam would sit down at the piano, not always waiting to be asked, and Paul would turn over the music for her. Frequently she would stop, after playing some special passage, and they would discuss its merits, and then again she would play through piece after piece with rare delicacy and power. Occasionally she would improvise, when Paul would lean back in his chair, where he could see her face in the soft light of the piano-lamp, and follow with exquisite delight the chords and harmonies that came at her will. One moment Paul would catch the glory of a June sunrise, see the birds spring from their nests, hear them twitter and sing in the morning light, listen to the brook gurgle softly on its way; then he would feel himself within some stately church, with its richly stained windows filled with mellow light, the altar, with its mystic coverings of purple and gold, and the congregation kneeling in adoring silence. Then again he would hear the winds sweep madly through the trees, the cries of the birds flying from the coming storm, and in another instant

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the mother's soft lullaby, as she crooned her little one to sleep. More than once Paul imagined that he could almost see the soul of the musician take on visible form, and pass away as a spirit-cloud into the realm of shadow and mystery.

One evening, after playing a sonata of Chopin, Miriam went to the window and stood there for a few minutes, enjoying the strange beauty of the night. There was no reason for Paul to rise from his comfortable chair and go to that window; nevertheless he did so. And perhaps it was the influence of Chopin's weird, mystic music, or something else, but, when he went to the window, he stood not far from where Miss Saxby was standing. For some time neither spoke, both seemingly absorbed in watching the moon sink behind a mass of clouds, then break through them and come out brighter even than before. Miss Saxby, who had bent forward, resting her hand lightly on the window, now stepped back, and, in doing so, grazed Paul's cheek with her hair; for he also had stooped to have a better look at the moon battling with the clouds.

"I beg your pardon," she whispered, softly.

Paul replied by gently touching her hand, then taking it in his, where she allowed it to remain.

Once more a delicious, yet almost painful, silence fell upon them, Miriam finally moving as though she would leave the window. This brought them face to face, and they looked at

each other, — that long, eager, heart-searching look, possible only once in the life of either man or woman, — upon which Paul bent down, and, in a voice thrilling with ecstasy, said: “Miriam!”

“Paul!” she answered, and the next moment their lips met, each giving to the other the rapture of a new-born love.

There was little sleep for Paul Bedford that night. On going to his room, he sternly upbraided himself for taking advantage of Mr. Saxby’s hospitality, and, in the spirit of a proud Virginian, gave his accusing conscience unstinted freedom. He felt that he had transgressed beyond all hope of pardon, and that his only course, as an honorable man, was to immediately leave Mr. Saxby’s service.

It is true he had known for some time that Miriam Saxby had realized his supreme ideal of womanhood, but this secret he had resolved to hold as a sacred possession, not sharing it with any one, least of all with the one whom it most concerned.

And now, in a weak, unguarded moment, he had betrayed himself, and worse, infinitely worse, had taken a cowardly advantage of Miriam.

Then he thought of how he had struggled against this love which he knew was hopeless, calling upon his pride, his honor, his sense of loyalty, everything that was worthy in him, that he might overcome. And after all he had failed,

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wretchedly, miserably failed. Yes, he would, on the morrow, resign from Mr. Saxby's service, and leave the city, the country perhaps, go anywhere or do anything to save himself from further dishonor. All of the blame for the scene in the parlor he took upon himself. He knew that Miriam was passionately fond of music, keenly susceptible to certain impressions, exquisitely sensitive, and, under the mad stress of his intense feeling, would be compelled to yield to his dominating influence.

So he tossed and tumbled about, spending a wretched, miserable night.

As a usual thing, Paul breakfasted alone, having to leave on an early train, but, on the morning following this eventful night, Miriam was in the breakfast-room when he went down. This was a meeting he had dreaded, thinking she would be indignant at his presumption, and in some way show how she regarded his unmanly course in taking advantage of her weakness.

But, to his surprise, though she flushed a little when he entered the room, it was not a guilty, indignant flush, but an expression rather of gladness at his coming, and was accompanied by a look, the meaning of which he could not mistake.

When the servants were safely out of hearing, she softly murmured: "Good morning, Paul," to which he gratefully responded:

"Good morning, Miriam."

Instantly his midnight fears and scruples passed away as light clouds before a strong wind. His sky was now one deep, eternal blue. The kiss of the night before meant a holy betrothal. Instead of fleeing coward-like, he would remain. To desert one whose love was so manifest would be the act of a craven. Come what would, he resolved to abide the result.

She waited while he went to her father's room with some papers that required Mr. Saxby's signature; she went with him to the library, where other papers for the office had to be arranged; then, when he was ready to start, she lifted up her face to his for a parting kiss, and, as the carriage turned the bend of the road, he saw her standing at the window where they had both stood the night before.

V.

MRS. SAXBY'S INTUITION

HOW easily the fates, concerning whose movements most of us are seriously troubled at times, could have prevented Paul Bedford from ever going to Pelham! In that case, he would not have met Miriam Saxby, at any rate not under such circumstances as would entitle him to any special place in her heart. As a further result, she would probably have married Clarence Fillmore, a young man of good family, considerable wealth, of more than average appearance, and by no means deficient in such abilities as are proper to one of his class.

Clarence was a healthy, wholesome fellow, fond of outdoor sports; could sail a boat as well as a Cape Cod fisherman; shoot better than any other man in the Pelham Club; ride with the daring of a jockey, or drive with the skill of a practised whip; was free with his money, and ready for anything that came along.

For some months he had been a frequent vis-

itor at the Saxby home; sometimes calling in the morning, when there was a yacht race or a coaching party, to which he would invite Miriam; or in the afternoon when there was to be a match game on the golf links, or a tennis tournament at the club; then again in the evening for some special function in Pelham or the regions beyond. Most of those who looked on nodded approvingly. Such a proceeding seemed eminently fitting. Clarence was rich, so was Miriam. And money usually marries money. So the good people of Pelham — those who were on visiting terms with the Saxbys — expected that in due time would come the announcement of the engagement of Clarence and Miriam, and afterward their wedding, which, of course, would be an event of social magnitude. And, if this programme had been carried out, it would probably have resulted in as much happiness as ordinary mortals are justified in expecting.

“What has become of Clarence Fillmore? I haven’t heard anything of him for some time. Every day after the visit of those infernal burglars I got a message or an inquiry from him. Has he gone South?”

As Mr. Saxby spoke, he closed the book he had been looking at but not reading, and turned to Mrs. Saxby, who had just finished a batch of letters, and was about to shut her desk.

“He called last week, the day before you came

down-stairs, I believe," Mrs. Saxby replied, in a tone of assumed indifference.

"That is at least ten days ago," Mr. Saxby said, in a tone in which there was very manifest surprise. "Did he say anything of going South for the winter?"

"No; he merely called to inquire about you, and stayed only a few minutes."

"You mean that Clarence Fillmore made a formal call ten days ago, and has not been here since?" Mr. Saxby's face now showed both surprise and resentment.

"That is just what I mean," Mrs. Saxby replied, each word given with judicious deliberation.

Mrs. Saxby rarely lost her temper, however great the provocation, but she had a singular gift of making other people lose theirs.

"Did he see Miriam when he called?" Mr. Saxby had known for some months how matters were shaping, and, as Clarence was thoroughly eligible in every way, saw no reason to interfere.

"Yes; he saw Miriam."

"Mary, there is something back of all this which I do not understand. Clarence Fillmore has some good cause for remaining away. He is not remarkably brilliant, I admit, neither is he one of your thin-skinned, morbidly sensitive fellows, who are so easily offended. I thought

everything was plain sailing with him and Miriam."

"So it was until recently."

"Has there been a quarrel or misunderstanding?"

"Neither, so far as I can see."

"Then what is the trouble?"

"Paul Bedford."

"Paul Bedford! What has he to do with it?"

Mr. Saxby's voice, though in its usual conversational register, had a clear, metallic ring, combined with a measure of intensity.

"Everything," and, saying this, Mrs. Saxby shut her desk, and, taking up a magazine, began turning over the pages, as though the last word had been spoken.

"Mary," said Mr. Saxby, in the same tone as before, "you have said either too much or too little. Remember I have been shut up in my room for a month past; only recently have I been permitted by Doctor Barrington to come downstairs for an hour or two in the afternoon. I know nothing, therefore, of what you intimate, and your hints are so vague that I must insist on something more definite. You say that Paul Bedford is the cause of whatever trouble exists between Miriam and Clarence. Kindly tell me just what you mean."

"I cannot tell you, Gaston, in so many words, for a woman, and particularly a mother, has

intuitions, instincts, if you will, for which there is no definite language. I merely know that since Mr. Bedford came to this house Miriam has not been the same girl as before. She spends every evening in the parlor with him, playing and singing, which, I presume, is all right enough if it would stop there. But she goes down every morning to the breakfast-room, and then waits to see him leave for the city. During the day she is eager and impatient, and several times has made excuses for meeting the train on which he generally arrives from New York. I cannot tell, though I am almost certain, whether she has flowers sent to his room, but every day fresh flowers are on his dressing-table."

"But what has all this to do with Clarence Fillmore?" Mr. Saxby asked, barely allowing his wife to finish her sentence.

"Simply that she ignores Clarence in every possible way. She doesn't go out with him, though he has asked her again and again. He wanted to take her over to the golf links the other day, but she sent an excuse. He wrote, inviting her to go with him to one of the college football games, and she declined. He called here two or three times in the evening, but she was so taken up with music and Mr. Bedford that he stayed only a few minutes."

"Has Clarence said anything to you?"

"Not by way of complaint, but, when he was

going the other day, he left his regards for you, and said he would drop in some day at the office when he knew you were able to go back to the city."

"And this you took to mean —"

"That he did not intend to call here again, at least under present conditions."

"What is to be done?"

"Send Mr. Bedford off to South America, China, to Bagdad, if you have an office there. To dismiss him from your service abruptly would excite remark, particularly as it is known that he had some share in your fight with the burglars."

"Damn the burglars!" Mr. Saxby said under his breath, then aloud: "but suppose he won't go, what then?"

"But he will go. He is young, ambitious, anxious to make his way in the world. Promise him a large increase in salary. Suggest that, by going abroad, he will not only improve his own chances of getting on, but will also be of material use to you. In this way you appeal to both his vanity and self-interest. He is sure to go."

"And what about Miriam?"

"Once Paul Bedford is gone, I can easily take care of Miriam."

"How?"

"By simply arranging matters so that they will go back to where they were before you got

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hurt. Miriam is not difficult to manage, and, if Bedford is out of the way, things will soon adjust themselves."

"I can't imagine that Miriam is so foolish as to think seriously of Bedford."

"It is only a passing fancy. You know her passion for music, and how delighted she is when at the opera or a concert. Mr. Bedford has doubtless flattered her, and said complimentary things about her playing and singing; the rest you can easily imagine."

They talked-on for some time in much the same strain, and, as Mrs. Saxby saw that Paul Bedford's hours at Pelham were numbered, and his days in the country would probably be few, she became more gracious in her manner than for some weeks past.

Here were father and mother arranging for the disposal of their daughter, as though she were a bale of cotton or a car-load of wheat, taking it for granted that she had neither feelings nor wishes of her own. Without compunction they would tramp ruthlessly across the threshold of that daughter's heart, rend in twain the veil which guarded the sacred shrine, invade the holy of holies in her soul, and compel her outraged womanhood to obey their will. All this, too, under the guise of prudence, and with the sole thought of their daughter's welfare!

VI.

A HONGKONG APPOINTMENT

NEXT morning, when giving Paul Bedford his orders for the day, Mr. Saxby was perhaps more courteous than usual, but it was a formal, precise courtesy, void of either cordiality or pleasantness.

“Mr. Walters, I understand, has returned to the office,” he said, as Paul was leaving the room.

“Yes, sir; he came back on Monday.”

“Is he all right again?”

“I think so; he seems so, at any rate.”

“Tell him—but I won’t detain you; it is almost train time,” and with a slight wave of his hand, which Paul understood, Mr. Saxby resumed the reading of his letter.

Paul was not in the best of spirits that morning as he went to the city. Miriam had not come down to the breakfast-room; the meal therefore was a dreary affair, Paul spending most of his time in looking at the door through which she usually entered, or at the clock, whose hands moved so swiftly toward the hour when

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he must leave. He sadly missed her "Good morning, Paul," whispered softly, accompanied by a dainty little blush and a look which said so much, but left unsaid so much more. And he missed her presence at the table, where her touch of his coffee-cup, as she filled it from the urn, made it to him a sacred thing, and the coffee a drink worthy of the gods. Were ever movements so graceful as hers! When she said "one lump or two?" he said "two," just to see how daintily she handled the sugar-tongs. And, though he rarely took cream in his coffee, when she asked him, he said "yes," because of the pleasure it gave him to see her use the pitcher.

The servants, of course, anticipated most of his wants, but Miriam's mention of a delicacy, or a suggestion that he be helped to it, instantly made it desirable to his eyes.

With a young man's daring, he would picture Miriam at the head of his table, and there would come upon him an almost uncontrollable desire to bundle the servants out of the room that he might gather her lovingly in his arms. More than all, he missed the blissful moments in the library, moments so rich in rapture that the memory of them filled the whole day with joy.

No wonder, therefore, that his journey to the city was dull and spiritless compared with that of other mornings.

To add to his discomfort, he thought of Mr.

Saxby's frigid courtesy, dismissing him the moment office matters were arranged. He had intended speaking to Mr. Saxby that morning about Miriam, though she had strongly urged him not to do so, but to wait until a better opportunity presented itself.

The inquiry concerning Walters also troubled him, for, while he knew that the time was hastening when his work as secretary would cease, he had hoped to continue until Mr. Saxby had fully recovered.

This meant, according to Doctor Barrington, at least three or four weeks longer, so the possibility of visiting at Pelham and seeing Miriam every day was one of inexpressible delight.

Fortunately he had a busy day, Mr. Saxby's commissions occupying almost every minute, and, when a young man's thoughts are fully taken up with business, he hasn't much chance to worry over love-affairs.

Occasionally Mr. Crewe went out to Pelham with Paul, but only when there were matters of special moment, concerning which Mr. Saxby desired his opinion. Paul therefore knew that something of importance had come up during the day when Mr. Crewe said he was going with him on the afternoon train. Mr. Crewe did not mention what the special business was, neither did Paul ask him, both knowing that Mr. Saxby preferred no discussion of his office affairs.

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On going down to dinner, Paul was sorely disappointed in not seeing Miriam, for of late they had frequently been fortunate enough to meet in the parlor before the others came in. He thought something had detained her, and that she would come in later, until he heard Mrs. Saxby say, in response to a polite inquiry of Mr. Crewe:

“Miss Saxby is quite well. She has gone to Stamford for a few days.”

Poor Paul! If the breakfast had been such a dull affair, the dinner was much more so. He tried to engage Mrs. Saxby in some form of conversation, but her replies were so definitely limited that he was forced to give up the attempt. Once or twice he suggested something which might have led to a general table talk, but Mr. Saxby listened politely, and made no response, an example followed carefully by Mr. Crewe.

What a difference Miriam's absence made! Paul glanced wistfully at the vacant chair, and pictured her bright, eager face, her dark, shining eyes, the quick turn of her shapely head, the smile which was wont to accompany her apt reply, and he could almost hear her rich, vibrant voice, as she narrated some little incident of the day.

Mrs. Saxby had given him to understand by her general bearing that she regarded him simply as her husband's clerk, and therefore a servant of the household, just as Cooney the coachman,

or Hines the butler, else he would have spoken of Miriam, asking possibly when she might be expected home. But he knew that such an inquiry would be deemed an impertinence. So Paul refrained from any mention of her name, and allowed the dinner to drone through as best it could.

What the dinner lacked by way of excitement, the conversation in the library supplied, for hardly had Paul finished his coffee before Mr. Saxby turned to him and said:

“Mr. Bedford, my office manager in Hongkong has resigned, and, as there are some important concessions left unsettled, I wish you to take charge at once. Passage has been secured on Saturday’s steamer. My agent at London will have everything ready for you. Our Hongkong business, as you already know, relates largely to the European markets, so you may have to remain in London for a week or ten days. That, of course, you can decide after seeing how things are in the London office. I need hardly say that this is an unusual opportunity for so young a man, but I am not unmindful of the service you have rendered me. I have talked this matter over with Mr. Crewe, who, I am glad to say, agrees in my selection of you for this responsible position. Of course there will be a substantial increase in your salary, of which Mr. Crewe will speak to-morrow at the office. Mr. Walters is

coming out in the morning to resume his position, so you are now free to make such preparations as are necessary."

"To Hongkong?" Paul questioned, almost staggered at the suggestion.

"Yes," Mr. Saxby answered, taking a cigar from the box on the library-table, but not before offering one to Mr. Crewe.

"And on Saturday?" Paul said, hesitatingly.

"Which gives you two days to get ready," Mr. Saxby replied, as he carefully fitted the end of his cigar into the cutter. "My first plan was to have you start to-morrow, but Saturday's boat is faster, and you will be more comfortable."

"I had no idea of this," Paul said, trying to smile, but the trial was not a marked success.

"I don't suppose you had, neither had I until Mr. Crewe gave me the cable message from London soon after you left this morning," and, as Mr. Saxby spoke, he lighted his cigar, motioning Mr. Crewe to do the same.

"I hardly know what to say—" Paul was beginning, when Mr. Saxby broke in, speaking with more energy than he generally did:

"Remember, Mr. Bedford, that I am entrusting you with a most serious responsibility. Remember also that, in accepting this position, you not only advance your own interests, but relieve me from embarrassments which cause me some anxiety."

Every word that Mr. Saxby said was true, yet anything more misleading could hardly be imagined.

He was embarrassed, but not over matters in Hongkong, and he was anxious, but not with regard to Chinese concessions!

These things Paul did not know, so he answered :

“If you put it in that way, I have no choice in the matter. Of course I will go, and gladly, if by so doing I can serve your interests.”

This time Paul smiled, bravely too, and his voice was tolerably steady. Somehow he was beginning to feel that in rendering this special service to Mr. Saxby he was also serving Miriam, and had the request called for his immediate departure to the Siberian mines, he would have given the same reply.

“Then let me suggest that you return to the city to-night with Mr. Crewe. By this plan you can have all of to-morrow forenoon at the office. If anything occurs of sufficient importance, I will let you know early on Friday, so that, if necessary, you can come out here later in the day. Mr. Crewe will attend to all matters of finance, and you may draw on him for such amounts as you require.”

As the carriage had been ordered for the 10.20 train, Paul was excused that he might pack his bag and prepare to leave the Saxby

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home. The packing was a short affair, for he jammed things into his bag without much regard to the result, so long as they got in. Then he sat down and took a farewell survey of the room in which he had spent so many blissful hours. How well he remembered that eventful night when, with Miriam's kiss upon his lips, and her sweet "Good night, Paul," thrilling in his heart, he had drawn his chair to the window, and for hours looked out into the darkness and silence.

There came to him the memory of a yet sweeter hour, when, in answer to the trembling question, she said: "Yes, Paul, I love you, and I love you with all my heart." Then she smiled, and in that smile he had a glimpse of the mysterious radiance which at times fills a woman's soul.

Not so ecstatic nor rapturous, but none the less grateful, was the memory of another time when she said, cheerily:

"Have no fears, Paul. Nothing can ever affect my love for you. I will wait for you no matter how long it may be."

And now he was ordered off to Hongkong, without so much as a chance to bid her good-bye!

Leaving his bag in the room, he crept softly down-stairs and quietly entered the parlor. It was, as he expected, empty and dimly lighted. The piano was open just as Miriam had left it

the night before, and, going over to it, he stooped down and kissed the keys her fingers so often had touched. Then he moved his hand gently along the keyboard, as if to feel in some way the hand of Miriam. After this, he went to the window, where she had stood on that night which meant for him the beginning of a new life, and, reverently kneeling as before a holy shrine, renewed his covenant with her, and took upon himself obligations as binding as death.

This, of course, was all very foolish. And there are those who would have laughed outright had they witnessed this strange performance. But with Paul it was not in the least foolish. Neither was it a performance. Indeed, he was never more serious in his life. The poor fellow's heart was so crowded with sweet memories of Miriam that now, when he was going away, with the possibility of not returning for years, he must say good-bye to something with which she was associated. What, then, better than the piano over which they had spent moments of rare delight, or the spot near the window where they had first kissed each other?

The next day he was busy with the preparations for his journey, the writing of letters, and in learning something of his new duties. Naturally he received all sorts of congratulations and good wishes. His fellow clerks considered him the luckiest fellow in the world. They gath-

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ered about him in the office, saying the pleasantest things imaginable; while sorry to have him go away, they thought such a promotion was a rare streak of good fortune. That same evening his more particular cronies gave him a farewell dinner, where various speeches were made, all sorts of toasts proposed, every possible suggestion offered, and puns, squibs, and rattle-pate nonsense worked off in quantity. Paul had his share of the fun, and laughed with the others, for they were honest, good fellows, who sincerely rejoiced in his prosperity, but there were times when, through the thick clouds of tobacco smoke, he could see Miriam's face, and over the din of laughter and song he could hear her voice. It was late when the little party broke up, finishing their solemnities with that exquisite and pathetic ballad, "For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny."

On going to the office next morning, Paul found a letter postmarked "Stamford," and addressed in evidently a lady's handwriting. He wondered if it was from Miriam, though he had not dared to hope for such a thing. As soon as he was by himself in the private office, he eagerly opened the precious epistle. To his great joy, it was from Miriam.

"MY DEAR PAUL: — You were, I know, very much disappointed when you did not see me yesterday morning, and then to learn last evening

that I had gone away without leaving any message for you. But mamma was most anxious about her sister, who lives in Stamford, and desired me to take the early train from Pelham. This will explain my absence from the breakfast-table, where I officiate, as you say, with such grace and charm! 'Officiate,' Paul, is not the best word in this case, but I quote from you, and disclaim all responsibility.

"My Stamford aunt enjoys poor health, and simply delights in drugs, fads, health foods, and revels gloriously in the daily visits of her physician, a dear, nice old gentleman, who settled here soon after Noah concluded to leave the ark. My aunt has no children, which is a pity, as a few lively cousins might cheer this big, gloomy house, besides giving her something to think of except thermometers and foodometers, and every other kind of ometer. It was dreadfully dull here last evening, my aunt's nerves not permitting of my touching the piano; my aunt's trained nurse not allowing me to remain with her illustrious patient after eight o'clock; and my aunt's husband going out to his club soon after dinner. But I snuggled down in a big chair in my room, and thought of you! And how strange that I should do so!

"I expect to return home on Monday, and, if you are very, very good, I may allow you to sit in the far corner of the music-room while I

indulge in some digitological harmonies. If, by any manner of means, you could find time to write me between now and Monday, I, on my part, will find time to read your letter from beginning to end. 'Good night, Paul!'

"Ever your own,

"MIRIAM.

"Address, 'The Pines.'"

Rather a singular love-letter, according to the accepted standard of such communications. But, from the eagerness with which Paul read it and re-read it, smiling here and there as he read, and the rich, glad light that came into his face, not only while he was reading, but every time he thought of it, apparently it answered all the purpose of a love-letter.

If any one had seen him put it away, giving it a place in the same pocket where he carried a little picture of his dead mother, he would have understood the valuation Paul put upon this letter of Miriam.

Just what he said by way of reply is not our affair. It may be assumed, however, that a young man who will kiss piano keys because a certain young lady's fingers have touched them, and kneel on a carpet because the same young lady's feet had stood on that special square, will not fail when he has opportunity to write to that particular young lady. One thing we know — he

wrote a long letter, for he dashed off sheet after sheet, and even double postage barely covered the weight of the envelope when it was sealed and ready for the mail.

As Paul was to sail on Saturday at noon, the hour when every one was busy in Mr. Saxby's office, he went to the steamer quite early, not that he was anxious to get away, but rather that he might save himself from resigning at the last moment and staying at home! After disposing of his baggage, and being shown to his room, he glanced curiously around the somewhat narrow quarters where he was to spend a week or more. Then he went on deck and watched the passengers as they came on, studying each group with more or less interest. He noticed a carriage drive up to the gangway, the horses bathed in sweat, as though the driver had urged them for some distance at their utmost speed, and to his amazement who should step out of it but Miriam. He was on the upper deck, but, before Miriam had reached the top of the gangway, he was there to greet her.

"I was so afraid of missing you," she said. "I got your letter just in time to take an express train, otherwise it would have been too late. Now tell me what all this means."

By this time they had moved some little distance from the gangway to a part of the deck comparatively secluded.

Paul told her of the arrangement by which he was to go to Hongkong, have charge of the office there, and attend to some important matters, at the urgent request of Mr. Saxby.

"Paul," she said, speaking rapidly, but with marked impressiveness, "I understand now why I was hurried off to Stamford, and you are being sent to China. This is simply a plan to separate us. Some one at Pelham has played the spy, and, as a result, you are going to the other end of the earth. But, Paul, it will not make any difference. Just remember that. No matter what you hear, or what you read, or what news is sent to you, nothing can affect my love for you. I wanted to say this to you before you went away. So now good-by, and God bless you, my own, own Paul!"

"God bless you, my own, own Miriam!" Paul said in return, though his voice was husky, and his face almost deadly pale.

"No, don't come with me to the gangway; stay just where you are. The ship will sail in a few minutes. Good-by once more, Paul, and remember that I will be faithful even unto death." The last words were hardly audible. Paul felt rather than heard them.

He saw her go down the gangway, reënter the carriage in which she had come, and, just as the tugs began to pull the steamship from her berth, he caught a glimpse of her white face through the carriage window.

VII.

DANGERS OF THE SEA

IT may have been a mere chance, but it so happened that Clarence Fillmore was on the steamer, in the saloon, standing near an open port-hole, when Miriam Saxby was bidding Paul Bedford good-by. Some friends of his, the Vernons, brother and sister, were going to winter in the Riviera; the brother, because of a throat trouble which threatened to become serious; the sister, because she was fond of her brother, and would not allow him to go alone. If Kitty Vernon had lived in Pelham, where Clarence Fillmore might have seen her frequently, or in New York, which is a suburb of Pelham, he would have fallen in love with her long ago, and never troubled the Saxby mansion except at certain stately functions. Unfortunately, she resided in Boston, not that such a circumstance implies a misfortune, but because propinquity is usually an important element in these matters. Clarence therefore saw Kitty only at rare intervals, though

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he managed to keep up a rambling correspondence with her brother Bert, learning from him of the intended sojourn in Europe. So he had come to see them off.

"I wish you were coming with us," Bert said, as the three stood chatting in the saloon. "We are going to have a lonely trip. With the exception of the Milltrums, I don't know a person on the list."

"I should enjoy it immensely," Clarence replied, pleasantly, looking, however, not at Bert, but at the trim, tailor-gowned figure of Kitty, who, in a travelling costume of dark gray tweed, a golf cape of Scotch plaid flung loosely over her shoulders, the nattiest little hat imaginable, and with sufficient color in her face to suggest both health and life, presented an appearance far from displeasing to the masculine eye.

"Are the Milltrums on the list?" Kitty asked, with as much disapproval as a Boston girl ever exhibits in public.

"Yes," Bert answered, somewhat ruefully. Handing the passenger list to Clarence, he said:

"Of course, one doesn't expect much of a crowd at this season, but you may know some of these people."

"Why, yes, here is Bedford, Mr. Saxby's new agent at Hongkong. Mr. Saxby told me last evening about Bedford, but I didn't know he was going on this ship."

"Are you sure it wasn't Miss Saxby who told you?" Bert asked, with assumed gravity.

"Miss Saxby is at Stamford," Clarence said, hastily; "I haven't seen her for nearly two weeks."

There was no need of it, and no seeming cause for it, nevertheless Clarence flushed perceptibly as he spoke, a matter which did not escape the clear eyes of the girl from Boston.

"Bedford is rather a nice fellow," Clarence went on; "musical, literary, and all the rest of it. Good-looking, too. Better exercise a brother's authority, Bert, or he may be giving you trouble."

For some reason, Clarence was anxious to divert the conversation from the Saxby channel, another circumstance very patent to the girl from Boston.

Just then the last warning sounded, so the good-bys were hurried through, and Clarence reached the gangway the same moment as Miriam, both of them going down within a step of each other. He recognized her instantly, but made no sign, and, as she went to the carriage, he walked rapidly to the end of the wharf, remaining there until the steamer pulled out, when he waved a parting salute to the Vernons. On his way back to the Grand Central Station, Clarence devoted most of his thought to Miriam Saxby's unexpected appearance at the steamer

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gangway, until it occurred to him that Mr. Saxby had entrusted her with some message or papers for Paul Bedford, which, in the rush of departure, had been forgotten.

He had another surprise on entering the station, for almost the first person he saw was Miss Saxby, waiting evidently for a train.

"This is a great pleasure," he said, going over to where she stood. "I thought you were in Stamford."

"That is where I am supposed to be," she answered, quietly, "but there were some matters which called me to the city."

"So I thought when I saw you at the White Star Pier —"

"Did you see me?" Miriam asked, anxiously, without giving Clarence time to finish his sentence.

"Yes; some friends of mine were going to-day, and I went to see them off. You left the steamer when I did, in fact, we were on the gangway together."

"Are you going home now?" Miriam asked.

"On the next train. I hope you are going at the same time."

"Would it inconvenience you to go to Stamford?"

"Not at all. This is not my busy day," Clarence said, smilingly.

"Mr. Fillmore," Miriam said, almost as soon as the train moved out from the station, "there are two or three matters of which I wish to speak with you." Then she stopped abruptly, as if afraid to say what she had intended.

"I am entirely at your service," Clarence said, courteously, wondering meanwhile at Miss Saxby's eager, nervous manner, something so unusual with her.

"I went this morning to see Paul Bedford off," she said.

"Yes," he answered, observing that she said "Paul."

"You may have thought it was some business matter that took me to the steamer."

"Yes, I did think so," Clarence replied, now thoroughly mystified.

"Well, it was nothing of the kind. No one at home has the faintest suspicion that I have been in New York to-day. I am, as you know, visiting with my aunt in Stamford. This morning I learned for the first time that Paul Bedford was going to Hongkong. So I came in on the express, and had just time to see him before the steamer sailed. Now will you kindly say nothing about having seen me. When I return to Pelham next week, I will explain matters as best I can, though some things will be difficult and unpleasant."

"You mean —"

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Clarence hesitated that Miss Saxby might the more fully realize what he implied.

"Yes, I mean everything and anything." Miriam was now desperate. She knew that Paul's ship was steaming swiftly across the sea, every minute taking him farther away from her. She knew also that she had been tricked into going to Stamford with the intent of hindering her from seeing him again. And she knew only too well what would be said when it became known she had gone to the steamer to bid him good-by.

"Then I am to understand that you and Mr. Bedford —"

"Yes," Miriam interrupted, speaking so softly that Clarence could hardly catch the word.

It is indeed most true that Clarence was not passionately in love with Miriam Saxby. It was not in his nature to be passionately in love with any one. Easy-going, good-natured, open-minded people seldom are.

That splendid passion, in whose intense flame pride, ambition, every form of selfishness are eagerly consumed, which makes the craven a hero, and transmutes the common metal into refined gold, was something of which Clarence Fillmore was happily ignorant. Hence Miriam's confession did not plunge him into the depths of despair, nor overwhelm him in a woe from which there was no possible escape. Still, he

was disappointed, keenly so, for it had been his hope, and not a distant one either, of winning Miriam's consent to share his home and life. Something of this was expressed in his face, usually so good-natured and pleasant. And this touched Miriam, for she remembered Clarence's marked attentions during the spring and summer months, and her quiet acceptance of them.

"Clarence," she said, laying her hand tenderly on his arm while speaking, "we have been dear good friends for a long time, and your friendship was never more precious to me than at this moment. Therefore, I am trusting you implicitly, and I am speaking to you with all possible frankness. I want you to remain my friend. I have great need of you. I know how generous and loyal you are. Won't you help me? I don't mean simply in the present instance of not speaking to my father about seeing me on the steamer, but when I return home. My people, of course, will be angry and disappointed, but, Clarence, I can't help it, indeed I can't. And, if I have hurt or grieved you in any way, please forgive me."

If Miriam had been a shrewd, astute, worldly-minded woman, one who had studied carefully how to exercise her wiles and blandishments so as to win her desires, she could not have taken a better way to gain the sympathy of Clarence Fillmore. But she was neither astute nor worldly-minded. A more frank, simple-hearted girl never

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lived. And this Clarence knew. Hence her appeal touched him deeply. With a tenderness of which Miriam hardly thought him capable, for naturally his voice was harsh, and his manner somewhat brusque, he said:

"Miriam, I will not pretend to hide my surprise and disappointment. Let me say frankly that I hoped we might have been something more than friends. But that is not going to stand in the way of our friendship at this time, so you can depend on me for any service I can possibly render."

By this time the train had reached Stamford, where Clarence, after seeing Miriam to a carriage, returned to the station. Lighting a cigar, he walked up and down the long platform, thinking over what Miriam had said, and the promise he had given her, concluding, finally, to remain in New York for a couple of days, perhaps longer, thus avoiding a meeting with the Saxbys, and the possibility of embarrassing questions.

So, on his arrival in the city, he telegraphed to Pelham, saying he would not return before Wednesday or Thursday of the following week.

As Paul Bedford had never voyaged on an ocean liner before, everything, of course, was strange to him, so he took no part in the scramble for seats at the captain's table, the immense value of such an honor not having dawned upon him.

He was accordingly assigned to the purser's table, by no means an undesirable place, for the purser was a genial fellow, who took a personal interest in the passengers entrusted to his care.

As the *Zidonia* was sailing easily, the sea being comparatively smooth, most of the passengers were down to dinner, the saloon therefore having the festive appearance usual on the first evening out from New York.

Paul's chair was at the extreme end, next to that of the purser, who at once entered into conversation with him, speaking English with a burr distinctly and delightfully Scotch.

Nearly opposite him, at the table, Paul saw a young and attractive-looking girl, whose dress and bearing suggested Miriam, though in every other way there was no resemblance whatever. This girl was fair, whereas Miriam was dark; this girl had clear gray eyes, while Miriam's were almost black; this girl's features were entirely different from those of Miriam; yet there was something in the poise of her small, shapely head, in the smile which at times played on her lips, in the twinkle of suppressed merriment in her eyes, which reminded him of Miriam, and he found himself wondering who she was, and if by some chance he might be introduced to her. Sitting next to her was a young man who resembled her in many ways, so Paul instantly made up his mind they were brother and sister.

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After dinner he went to the smoking-room, where the formalities are seldom oppressive, and soon Bert Vernon came in, taking the next chair to that of Paul.

"As we are to have the pleasure of sitting opposite to each other, at the same table, for the next seven days, suppose we exchange cards," Bert said, pleasantly, bringing out his card-case and giving one to Paul.

"Thank you," Paul replied, as he took the card, and gave his in return.

"Well, this is a piece of rare luck!" Bert remarked, heartily. "Clarence Fillmore was on the steamer to see us off, and he looked everywhere for you that he might introduce us."

"Mr. Fillmore, of Pelham?" Paul asked, anxiously, wondering if he had seen Miriam on the steamer.

"Yes, Mr. Fillmore of Pelham, though I knew him in Harvard, where, like myself, he was the bright particular star of the faculty, the white-haired boy of every Don in Cambridge."

Paul smiled.

"You evidently are acquainted with Mr. Fillmore, whose insatiable thirst for classic lore so distinguished him that he haunted the gymnasium, made daily visits to the ball grounds, pulled stroke oar in every race, and developed muscle enough to wrestle with an ox."

Bert rattled off this tribute to Clarence Fill-

more in such a lively fashion that Paul laughed heartily.

"He is one of the best fellows in the world," Bert went on, "true as steel, straight as a gun-barrel, couldn't do a mean thing if he tried, and is good stuff clear through."

Though Paul knew almost nothing of Clarence Fillmore, having met him only once or twice at the Saxbys', he was glad to hear young Vernon speak so warmly and pleasantly of him. Then they chatted of other things, and before their cigars were half through each had formed a kindly opinion of the other.

"I want you to meet my sister," Bert said, as they both left the smoking-room. "She is a first-rate sailor, far better than I am. I generally go under the second day out, but she keeps up all the way over. I wish I could, but one can't have everything in this world."

Miss Vernon was found snugly ensconced in the reading-room. She smiled pleasantly when Paul was introduced, and her reception was all the more cordial because the Milltrums, who were on the other side of the reading-room, had suggested only a few minutes before that she seemed lonely and out of spirits.

The Milltrums had seats at the captain's table, within easy speaking distance of that mighty potentate, and as a consequence thought they owned the ship and all that it contained.

True to his promise, Bert disappeared about noon the following day, as also many others, for the Atlantic in December has whims and fancies of its own which are not to be trifled with.

Kitty Vernon and Paul Bedford had, therefore, ample opportunity to form a delightful acquaintance. Sometimes the weather would not permit of a deck promenade, for the *Zidonia* lurched and rolled in such fashion that walking was almost impossible, and then at other times not only would the spray fall in sheets, drenching those who were unluckily on deck, but an occasional plunge of the ship would send floods of water well-nigh the entire length of the vessel, more than once doing considerable mischief.

But Miss Vernon and Paul went out whenever it was possible, and though not always able to escape the spray, and having more trouble to keep their feet than either of them bargained for, their experiences were amusing rather than hazardous, and they would laugh heartily at their mishaps.

After a time they began to talk of matters other than books and music and art, and ere long the name of Miss Saxby was mentioned. Paul never knew just how Miss Vernon managed to lead the conversation up to that point, but she did, and adroitly, not because of any wish to pry into Paul's affairs, but for reasons of her own.

Nor did he ever learn how she discovered the real condition of affairs, but she did, and the discovery gave her sincere pleasure. Then they began to talk freely, at least Paul did, and long before the Irish coast was within hailing distance, Kitty Vernon knew most of the hopes and ambitions with which Paul Bedford's heart was filled.

On the sixth day out, a dense fog had settled down, compelling the ship to creep along at less than half-speed, and the big horn was sounded every few minutes. A sense of danger began to overspread the *Zidonia*. The passengers remembered that they were now approaching the Irish coast, where many a noble ship had met disaster.

Those who had lain languidly on sofas and steamer-chairs, carefully tended by the stewards, now bestirred themselves, and more than one face began to show signs of anxious dread. As the day wore on, and night shadows mingled with the fog, the anxiety increased, the captain's absence from the dinner-table adding to the general alarm. Here and there little groups formed in the library, talking softly, so unlike the hilarity usual at this hour.

"The *Zidonia* is one of the best ships in the Atlantic service. Captain Bruce is a thorough seaman, and has had many years experience, but a fog on the Irish coast is nasty, and makes hard

sailing," the purser said, in reply to Paul Bedford, who spoke to him soon after nightfall.

"What would you advise?" Paul asked, wondering if it would not be well to warn Vernon, and thus be prepared for any emergency.

"That you try to make things as lively as possible in the saloon. Get up some kind of a concert or entertainment. Start the young people to sing, or anything else you can. Whatever danger there is does not threaten us to-night. We are still a long way from the coast. Perhaps the fog may lift before morning; then we can see where we are."

So Paul bustled around enlisting such help as he could find, asking one to sing, another to play, another to recite, doing it in such a bright, cheery way, that the passengers temporarily forgot the dangers of which they had all been speaking but a few minutes before.

In the morning the fog had not lifted; it was, if anything, more dense than before. Again the captain was absent from the table, and it was known that he had spent all night on the bridge. The big ship groped its way through the encircling mist as a man would in the darkness, lifting its voice with a strange pathos, as though appealing to the coast for some answering sign. But no sound broke the stillness save the churning of the sea, and the slow, measured stroke of the engines. Every ear was strained.

Every eye was keen. Every heart was throbbing intently. It was now suspected that the ship was out of its course, and any moment might strike the awful rocks where so many others had struck.

Bert and Kitty Vernon were standing with Paul on the deck, not far from the boat of which the purser would have command in case the boats were lowered. Bert was no coward, but he was a semi-invalid, and the raw, pitiless fog almost choked him. Turning to Paul, he said: "If anything happens, look out for Kitty."

Kitty tried to smile reassuringly, and was about saying something to cheer Bert, when the great ship rushed upon the reefs, whose teeth tore through the plates of steel as a giant saw ripping its way through soft boards. Then followed a scene in which some men, like raging demons, fought their way over one another that they might reach the boats at the davits, trampling down in their mad fury helpless women and children.

"Stand back there!" Paul said to a big burly fellow, who was pushing his way to the purser's boat, followed by a dozen or more equally brutal and selfish.

The man made no reply, but pushed on, when Paul, maddened by this display of cowardice, with one blow sent him sprawling to the deck.

Another frightened wretch met the same ter-

rible fist, for Paul was so enraged that his blows were as those of a trip-hammer.

“Lower the boats! Women and children first. The men must wait. The first man to enter a boat without permission I will shoot,” came in trumpet tones from the captain, who was standing on the bridge. Kitty Vernon refused to leave Bert, and no entreaty or persuasion had the least effect on her. Her face was pale, for the awful scene deeply moved her, but her lip did not quiver as she saw the purser’s boat lowered, and when filled with an anxious, struggling company, pull away into the fog.

“I will go with you, Bert, not before,” she answered, calmly, and neither did she, and it was with Bert and Paul as well that she left the ill-fated *Zidonia*, their boat being the last to pull away.

VIII.

LONDON

THE Misses Milltrum, so recently favored guests at the captain's table, from which lofty place of social honor they rarely condescended to less distinguished passengers, made a sorry appearance as they huddled in the stern of the boat into which so many had been crowded. That an accident could happen to the steamer which carried such persons and fortunes as theirs never once occurred to them. So they had made light of the suggestions and fears which troubled wiser and more experienced travellers, and, as if to emphasize their disregard of all warnings, came to the table in dainty breakfast gowns, and after breakfast fluttered about the saloon in genuine butterfly fashion. When the *Zidonia* ran on the rocks, and it was feared she would soon founder, they had hardly time to rush to their rooms, gather up the first cloak or shawl that came to hand, and then hasten to the deck, which by this time was crowded, and in fearful confusion. Hundreds of Italians returning home for the

Christmas holidays; scores of Germans and Irish bent on the same errand; women with children in their arms and with others clinging to their skirts had come up from the steerage, and their cries, screams, shouts, entreaties, were heartrending.

Boat after boat pushed off, but each one without the Milltrums, for they were helpless in such a rough and brutal company. Even the stewards, who had waited on them with such solicitude, passed them by without a thought or a glance, and as they stood shivering in their thin silken gowns, they looked helpless and forsaken.

Paul Bedford, however, came to their rescue. Not for a moment did he think of the cold stares they had given him, or the icy indifference with which they had regarded him, since making the discovery that he was in the service of Mr. Saxby. Paul only remembered that they were helpless women, whose lives, like that of his own, were in deadly peril, and whom he was bound to assist by all possible means. So he helped them into the boat, gave them his heavy ulster, and tried to make them as comfortable as was feasible under the circumstances. And they were most grateful, for at heart they were well-meaning women, but, like many others, had allowed a little money to turn their heads.

The Milltrums, however, as they shivered under Paul's ulster, determined, if they ever had

the opportunity, to repay something of their obligations to the young man who had so befriended them.

Bert and Kitty were much better off so far as raiment was concerned, for a hint from the purser had enabled Paul to warn them of what might happen at any moment. To sit cramped and stiff in an open boat for long, weary hours, in the chill wind of a December day, enswathed by a mist so thick that the keenest eye could not see the boat's length ahead, meant for all of them a time of suffering and anxiety. Bert Vernon was the first to weaken, for the pitiless fog started his cough, and though the poor fellow made heroic efforts to control himself, and smiled bravely after each racking spasm, it was very evident he was in a bad way. The boat was so crowded that any change of position seemed impossible, and though the men pulled bravely at the oars, the choppy sea and the head wind, but most of all the dense fog, made progress fearfully slow.

Ship-bread and water were served out during the afternoon, but few could eat or drink, nearly all being so benumbed with cold as to have no desire for anything but warmth. Then it began to grow dark, and there seemed every prospect of another night even more dreary and dismal than the one before, when a ship's horn was heard in the distance, followed by the beat of

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paddles. A great shout was at once raised, the men yelling at the tops of their voices, and some of the women joining in the scream. Then the ship's horn sounded more clearly, the paddles beating just fast enough to give the vessel steerageway. Another shout was now raised, this time even louder and stronger than before, for hope had entered into every breast, and fear as well, for a collision with the unknown steamer would mean death to nearly all on the boat. This shout was answered by the paddles ceasing to churn, followed by a long blast from the horn, and then a succession of short blasts. Again the *Zidonia's* boat made eager response, and the men at the oars pulled with all their might in the direction of the unseen ship, which again and again sent out its cheering sound. At length there loomed up out of the fog and darkness a channel steamer, over whose sides leaned almost every man on board, and soon the benumbed, well-nigh frozen passengers of the *Zidonia* were receiving such care as the warm-hearted Britishers could bestow. The next day they were landed at Liverpool, where most of them remained to hear from the other boats on which they had friends and relatives. The Vernons, with Paul Bedford, hastened on to London, Kitty being anxious to reach the Riviera at the earliest possible moment, for she had much

cause to fear the results of the exposure and cold on Bert.

Paul received a cordial welcome at the London office from Mr. Shellard, the manager in charge, and by him was shown such of the sights and lions of the huge metropolis as are usually sought by tourists. Of course he admired the Abbey and the Tower, St. Paul's, and the Houses of Parliament, but he felt lonely and depressed. The city was gay, for it was almost Christmas, the festival of all others dear to English hearts. But he had an unutterable longing for New York, not for New York in itself, but because it was within half an hour of Pelham! More than once he would leave the office and wander along the streets, looking into the shop-windows, where there were so many beautiful things he wanted to buy for Miriam.

In Bond Street he imaginatively selected pearl necklets, diamond brooches, rings and pins of exquisite design, more than enough to have swamped a fortune. He associated Miriam with every pretty thing he saw, and in fancy bought her at least a thousand Christmas gifts, following each one with his heart's desire. When he went to St. Paul's on Sunday morning, as the organist played something from "The Messiah," he thought of Miriam and the unaffected pathos with which one evening she had sung, "He was despised." Going early that same afternoon to

Westminster Abbey, his heart throbbed wildly as he saw, in a party of Americans, who were being escorted by the verger to a prominent pew, a girl who reminded him of Miriam. Indeed, so completely were his thoughts taken up by her, that if, when he was standing on some street corner undecided as to which turn he ought to take, a policeman should have suddenly asked him his name, he would most likely have instantly replied, "Miriam Saxby!"

With what rejoicing, therefore, did he receive a letter with the Pelham postmark, dated a few days after he had left New York.

Parts of this letter are too tender for such coarse, harsh things as printer's type. We must therefore in this case be content with a scrap here and there.

" . . . I have reason to think that my visit to Stamford was planned, just as the opening in Hongkong was made for you. But it is too late. I am yours for time and eternity, just as you are mine. And I now withdraw my obligations of secrecy. On the way home last Saturday I told Clarence Fillmore how matters stood. He was on the steamer seeing some friends off, and we met in the station. He has promised to be my friend, and that promise he will keep. At the first good opportunity I intend speaking to papa, for I will not allow him to think that everything is not fully understood

between us. He is likely to be angry, for reasons which you understand, but that will make no difference. It would not surprise me if he requested your resignation, for which I am almost hoping, as then you would soon be home again. And remember, Paul, when you are ready to take me, I am ready to go. I dearly love my parents and my beautiful home, but the love that I have for you means a thousandfold more to me than houses or money or anything else! Don't forget that. You are now a part of my life, not simply an essential to my happiness, but to my very being. . . . I am eagerly looking for a letter from you, and I need not say, am wishing for you a pleasant trip, for I write this as you are on the sea."

That evening Paul wrote a frank, manly letter to Mr. Saxby, which he carried to the General Post Office in St. Martins Le Grand, to secure its going out on the morning mail. It is needless to say that the same mail carried a much longer letter to Miriam.

Walking down Regent Street early one afternoon, Paul met the Milltrums, who greeted him very cordially, and insisted on his dining with them that evening at the Langham. He made various excuses, but they would not be refused, and urged him so strongly that to decline would have seemed a discourtesy. After dinner Miss Milltrum, a keen, shrewd woman of at least

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thirty-five, Maud, her sister, possibly five years younger, led Paul to speak of his proposed trip to Hongkong, and his position there as agent for Mr. Saxby.

"A young man such as you should not be compelled to go to Hongkong," Miss Milltrum said, in her sharp, decisive way.

"Beggars can't be choosers," Paul replied, with a smile.

"I wouldn't go to Hongkong for all the Mr. Saxbys between here and the North Pole," Miss Maud said, with even more decision than her sister.

"Why?" Paul asked, looking first at one, then at the other.

"Why should a trained, keen-witted American waste himself in a life which has no possibilities whatever?"

It was Miss Milltrum who spoke, holding her hand so as to shield her face from the flaring firelight, meantime steadily regarding Paul.

"I am considered a most fortunate person," Paul replied, "almost every man in the office envies me. Some of them seem to think that I have fallen heir to 'Jacob's ladder,' and can easily climb from the stone pillow of poverty to the heaven of wealth and prosperity."

"An agent of Mr. Saxby at Hongkong resembles an umbrella which has its biggest and best spread at the first opening. An umbrella,

Mr. Bedford, has neither ideals nor possibilities." This time Miss Milltrum the younger was the speaker.

For some reason the Misses Milltrum did not like Mr. Saxby. That was very evident.

"You have been exceedingly kind to us, Mr. Bedford," Miss Milltrum said, speaking with some feeling, "and we are under obligations which we can never hope to repay. It is, of course, very thoughtless of us, though we do not mean any unkindness, I assure you, to discourage your going to Hongkong. But should you for any reason give up your appointment there, do us the great favor of communicating with the Milltrums of Chicago, who have important interests in that city. I wanted to say this to you, and perhaps we may have the privilege of proving that we are not ungrateful."

Before Paul could reply, Miss Milltrum went on, but in much lighter vein:

"Having disposed of these business preliminaries, if you have no other engagement for the evening, will you kindly take us to the Lyceum? Irving is there playing in 'The Bells,' and we are most anxious to see him. My sister thoughtfully secured a box, and the carriage is ordered for eight."

Paul understood perfectly the tact and delicate courtesy of the Milltrums in this arrangement, and immediately accepted their invitation.

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That evening, as he intently studied Irving, Paul Bedford entered into the realm of the occult and mysterious, nor was it so much by the arts and stage tricks of the actor, as through the suggestions which were made to his own mind. If the wretched innkeeper in a dream, when under the supposed influence of a mesmerist, must needs go back many years in his life, and reenact the tragedy of which he was such a terrible figure, why not have reincarnations in other forms and even more impressive conditions? Was not the innkeeper's dream as real as the thoughts and life of his waking hours? With bated breath he followed every movement of Irving, whose acting as the innkeeper is so powerful that even the most dull and unimaginative are strangely moved by it.

The Milltrums, hardened playgoers as they were, did not so much as whisper all the time Irving was on the stage. Paul thought of Miriam, so keenly sensitive, so easily moved by everything that appealed to her higher nature, so deeply affected by certain phases of thought and emotion, and he wondered if, when Irving went to New York, she would go to see him. How her eyes would fill with light, her face become strangely tense, her lips quiver with suppressed excitement! He could see her leaning eagerly forward lest a word or movement should escape her, and he could almost hear her

sigh of relief when the curtain fell, and the lights turned up again.

Going back to the Langham, very little was said, each one seemingly working out the problem so powerfully given at the Lyceum.

Having mastered, at least in part, some of the principal features of Mr. Saxby's interests in Hongkong, Paul began to make his preparations for leaving London. Passage was engaged on the P. & O. steamer, which sailed from the East India docks the Saturday following, and as the *Zidonia* did not prove such a wreck as was at first feared, Paul secured his baggage containing the outfit he had bought in New York. One morning, on going to the office, Mr. Shellard handed him a cablegram which read :

"Have made other arrangements for Hongkong — you are no longer in my service. Mr. Shellard will settle all financial matters with you.

"GASTON SAXBY."

Paul turned deadly pale, and for the moment was completely stunned, but he suddenly remembered that Miriam had written : "It would not surprise me if he requested your resignation, for which I am almost hoping, as then you would soon be home again."

"What is the trouble?" Mr. Shellard asked,

seeing how excited Paul was. Paul simply handed him the cablegram.

"What have you been doing?" he then asked, not unkindly, for he had taken quite a liking to Paul.

"Nothing to warrant this," Paul answered, taking the cablegram from Mr. Shellard's hands, and reading it once more.

"No scrape or foolery on the other side? No trouble about money matters? Things, you know, always look a thousand times worse when a fellow is not there to explain them." Mr. Shellard had genuine sympathy in his tone.

"The head and front of my offence is this," Paul said, grimly, "I have presumed to fall in love with Miss Saxby, and have been honest enough to ask her father to approve."

Mr. Shellard looked at Paul in silent amazement. That he, a clerk in Mr. Saxby's office, should have had the effrontery to raise his eyes to Miss Saxby, and actually write to her father proposals of marriage, seemed to him audacity of such proportions as to be almost sublime!

"And you call that nothing," he said, when his astonishment had so far subsided as to admit of speech.

"Nothing to be ashamed of," Paul answered, hotly, "and certainly nothing to warrant instant dismissal from his service, as if I were a common messenger or office-boy."

"Now, Bedford, you surely have sense enough to know that Mr. Saxby couldn't possibly retain you as one of his agents, after such a preposterous suggestion."

"There was nothing preposterous about it," Paul replied, as hotly as before.

"Let us look at it calmly for a minute. Here you are a young man with hardly salary enough to pay your way, and a prospect of spending five or ten years of life in Hongkong. Under these conditions you write to Mr. Saxby, proposing marriage with his daughter, a young lady who has never known anything but luxury, and no more fitted for a poor man's wife than I am to be Archbishop of Canterbury. My dear fellow, the thing is absurd! Of course I am sorry for you, very sorry, and if I had known that you intended making such a proposal I would have tried to dissuade you. Nothing can be done now. The only question is, what are you going to do? I would advise you to remain in London. Mr. Saxby has considerable influence in New York. And these big firms stand in together on certain lines. So the chances are that he will block your way. You would do better to stay here. That is my honest opinion."

And Mr. Shellard meant every word of it. Not even the chance to be elected governor of the Bank of England would have kept Paul Bedford on the other side of the Atlantic, with

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Miriam Saxby in Pelham. Indeed, after the first shock of his summary dismissal had passed, he actually felt a sense of relief, and hastened to the shipping office to secure passage on the first steamer for New York.

That evening he called at the Langham to see the Milltrums, who next day were going to Nice for the winter.

"So you are not going to Hongkong!" Miss Milltrum said, eagerly, when he had spoken of the other arrangements Mr. Saxby proposed.

Naturally he made no reference to his dismissal from Mr. Saxby's service, for that would probably have opened the way to other matters, and brought Miriam's name into the conversation.

"I am glad of it," Miss Maud said. "Now let me say that we have written to the Chicago Milltrums, and if you think of leaving New York, don't forget your promise. The Chicago Milltrums may not be quite so prominent as Mr. Saxby, but they are fully as honorable."

The emphasis given to the term "honorable" was most distinct.

Within two days Paul Bedford was again on the Atlantic, and the New Year had hardly well announced itself before he was back in New York.

IX.

NEW YORK AND HARD TIMES

MR. SHELLARD proved a true prophet. The mysterious but powerful influence of Mr. Saxby thwarted Paul Bedford continually, and offices which, a few months before, would have eagerly made place for him, coldly turned his applications aside. While nothing was said which reflected in any degree on the young man's integrity, — Mr. Saxby being far too shrewd for that, — there was a hazy, undefined suspicion suggestively whispered, a suspicion far more injurious than a frank, positive charge. Leaving Mr. Saxby's service just after his appointment to Hongkong; receiving his dismissal by cable; without Mr. Saxby's name as one of his references, and refusing to offer any explanations, were matters too serious for business men to overlook. So Paul received either scant favor or curt refusal. His former office associates avoided him as though he had the plague. He wrote to Mr. Crewe, with whom he had been on the most friendly terms, but received no reply.

Fortunately, he had been able to return to his boarding-place on Washington Square, and so far Mrs. Figgis had received proper response to the neatly-folded bill, which every week nestled under his plate. But as the weeks went by, Paul saw that things were growing serious. He went from place to place making inquiries; he answered newspaper advertisements; he offered to do almost any kind of office work, but when asked, "In what office were you last?" or "Why did you leave Mr. Saxby?" he had no reply except a proud silence, which nothing could break. This usually ended the interview. So it went on from week to week. There came a time when his little stock of money was exhausted and there were days when he knew the meaning of actual hunger. He struggled on, pawning some little trinkets that had belonged to his mother, and finally the gold watch, once a cherished possession of his father. All this time he heard nothing from Miriam, though not once did he question her loyalty or affection.

Finally he remembered a college classmate on the staff of *The Gotham Gazette*, and through him was introduced to the news editor, who received him kindly. At first, by doing odd jobs in the office and scribbling a little now and then, he managed to earn enough to meet the claims of Mrs. Figgis, but not much more. After a

few weeks he did better, and was given assignments of some importance.

"Saxby, of Pelham, is going to have a big blowout, and wishes us to send a reporter to his house to-morrow evening. Grey was going, but the chief has sent him to Washington. Fix up and go along, Bedford; it will pay you." It was the news editor who spoke, looking at Paul, who was making up copy he had just returned from gathering.

To go to Pelham! To be in the same house with Miriam once more! To see her, perhaps even speak with her! In a moment all this flashed upon Paul, and his heart throbbed wildly. But in another moment he realized the impossibility of accepting this assignment. Mr. Saxby would instantly recognize him, and a scene probably follow.

"Can't Wilkins go?" he asked the news editor, referring to a member of the staff, who usually took care of society matters.

"No, there is a wedding at the Vanderplonks, and later the McFoosilum's ball."

"All right," Paul answered, desperately, resolved to find some excuse for declining this unexpected duty.

As he thought it over, there came into his mind such an overwhelming desire to see Miriam, that he determined to go, regardless of consequences.

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The gathering at the Saxbys' was a brilliant affair. The big house was lighted from top to bottom. Potted plants in endless variety and profusion filled up nooks, chinks, corners, so as to suggest rooms and spaces beyond; the Saxby hothouse furnished all manner of flowers, and so lavishly that for once the decorators had more than enough to work out their designs; an orchestra of trained musicians were cunningly hidden behind a screen of palms, thus softening their music and imparting to it the quality of distance; the most fashionable caterer of New York, — Tortoni, of Broadway, had charge of the refreshments, and, so far as money and good taste were concerned, nothing was left undone to make the evening one of rare enjoyment.

Mr. Saxby had a double purpose in this celebration — to announce definitely his own full restoration to health, and give his friends an opportunity to offer their congratulations; and also to impress some English capitalists, who had come over on promoting enterprises. Mr. Saxby invariably had two strings to his bow, and other strings in his pocket as well. The violin might not yield all the music expected, but the fault would not be in the bow, or in Mr. Saxby's supply of strings.

Mrs. Saxby, imposing and impressive as dress-making art and a deep pervading sense of her own importance could secure, received her guests

with unrelaxing dignity, a sure proof of recent accession to social honor. When a woman has to put corsets on her manners, or watch her words lest one tumble out the wrong way, her pedigree is so short that one step back leads to a whole bunch of ancestors with whom acquaintance is by no means desirable.

What Mrs. Saxby lacked in repose and gentleness of manner, Miriam supplied, for in her simple white gown of Colonial fashion, a style from which she rarely departed, a string of pearls as flawless as the neck which they encircled, her dark hair bringing out in exquisite contrast her pale and wonderfully expressive face, she looked, when compared with her mother, like an Easter lily beside a hollyhock. And Miriam was even paler than usual. In the early evening, under the first flush of excitement, she had enough color to tinge her cheek slightly, but later this died away. Then there was a hunted, frightened look in her eyes; not that they lacked brightness, for they shone as stars, but there was something in them which suggested apprehension, if not positive fear.

Clarence Fillmore managed to get a few minutes' chat with her, the first since their conversation on the train to Stamford.

"I had a long letter the other day from Bert Vernon. It was the Vernons I went to see off that day."

Miriam smiled, but sadly. She well remembered the day Clarence referred to.

"Bert has a whole raft of good things to say about Mr. Bedford. He was the hero of the wreck; knocked people down who were not behaving well; helped some people who were in all kinds of trouble, and showed himself to be a first-rate fellow."

Miriam's eyes glowed as Clarence, in his frank, boyish way, spoke of Paul.

"Bert and Kitty — Kitty is his sister, you know, and a mighty nice girl — came across the Milltrums the other day in Nice. The Milltrums were on the *Zidonia* with the Vernons. Miss Milltrum told Bert that Mr. Bedford did not go to Hongkong after all."

"Where, then, did he go?" Miriam asked, in amazement.

"The Milltrums said that he expected to sail for New York about the last of December."

"But why haven't I heard from him? Paul in New York all this time, and not a line from him!"

Clarence had no reply ready, but strongly suspected that Mr. Saxby could easily have supplied the necessary information.

"I have written him every few days at the London office," she went on, "and yet have received only one letter from him since he went away."

This time Clarence thought Mrs. Saxby, if she so desired, could explain matters.

Then he said:

"The Milltrums gave Bert the impression that Mr. Bedford might go to Chicago."

"On business?"

"Yes, but not connected with Mr. Saxby."

"Then Paul wrote to papa, who, I suppose, was angry, and probably dismissed him."

"Very likely."

Later in the evening, when very much exhausted, and hoping to gain a few moments' rest, Miriam went to the library, where, to her disappointment, she saw a middle-aged man, a reporter, evidently, copying off the guest-list, and writing an account of the gathering for a morning paper. The reporter had iron-gray hair, a heavy beard, which covered most of his face, and, though the light was comparatively dim, he wore blue glasses, as if to protect his eyes.

"I beg your pardon," Miriam said, quietly, "I did not know any one was here."

For reply, the reporter raised his hand with a warning gesture, which startled Miriam, then he glanced quickly around the room to see if they were alone, and in another moment had arisen from the table at which he was writing.

"Miriam!" he whispered.

"Paul!" she answered, between a whisper and sob.

"I had to come," he said, hurriedly. "I wanted to see you, to speak with you if possible. It is nearly three months since I heard from you, and I couldn't stand it any longer."

"I have written you a dozen times," she said, excitedly, though speaking in a whisper.

"And I have written you twice a dozen times," he replied, in a low tone.

"My poor Paul!" she murmured, tenderly. "But I must be going now. Contrive in some way to leave your address with Clarence Fillmore. I will then be able to write you. Good night, Paul! and remember, whatever happens, I am your Miriam."

The last words were spoken with such softness that Paul barely heard them, then she disappeared.

The next day *The Gotham Gazette* gave a generous report of the Saxby reception. Mr. Saxby, while affecting, like some other prominent financiers, a contempt for newspaper fame, secretly loved to see his name in print, particularly when it was associated with the social world.

"That reporter of *The Gotham Gazette* evidently knew his business," he said the following evening to Mrs. Saxby and Miriam, after reading the lengthy notice. "I thought at first he

was an awkward, blundering fellow, for he stooped, and shuffled, and hardly seemed to know what he was doing."

Miriam was reading the *Gazette* just then, holding it well up to her face, otherwise Mr. Saxby might have seen a strange gleam in her eyes, and the ghost of a smile on her lips.

"I will send that reporter my compliments and the price of a couple of boxes of cigars," he continued.

Mr. Saxby had a distinct impression that everything in this world was a matter of cash settlement, and that a check wiped out all possible obligations. Perhaps if he had seen Miriam's face at that moment its expression might have startled him.

But there are some things which one is better for not seeing, just as there are other things which one is better for not hearing.

X.

MR. MILLTRUM OF CHICAGO

MR. SAXBY'S check, accompanied by a brief note, was sent to *The Gotham Gazette*, and in due time reached Paul Bedford.

"I said it would pay you to go out to Pelham," the news editor remarked, pleasantly. "Saxby isn't a bad sort, though people have lots to say about him. He must think you smoke a pretty good cigar. Most of us have to be content with a bulldog and plug."

"What am I expected to do with this?" Paul asked, as he held the check in his fingers, much as one would a dirty rag.

"Cash it, of course. Buy a wagon-load of cigars. Have them piled up here on these shelves. Invite us to help ourselves, and don't be surprised if, in three days or less, nothing remains but the empty boxes."

As the news editor spoke, he took his briar bulldog from its pigeonhole, and looked at it suggestively.

"But, Mr. Stewart, I can't use this check.

Mr. Saxby had no right to send it here. It looks like a 'tip' to the waiter, or a nickel to the office-boy."

Paul's face had an indignant flush as he laid the check down on his desk.

"What will you do with it?"

"Send it back."

"You can't do that."

"Why?"

"It would raise all kinds of ructions."

"In what way?"

"Saxby would be as mad as blazes. He owns stock in this paper. Outsiders don't know that; but when he wants anything done, we generally hear from him."

"Mr. Saxby owns stock in this paper?"

That Paul should be virtually in Mr. Saxby's employment again was a bitter surprise to him.

"Of course he does. Why not? These big fellows on the stock exchange run newspapers as they do steam yachts, or fast horses."

"Then you can count me out. I am through. My relations with Mr. Saxby are such that I cannot remain here. I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Stewart, but my desk is at your service."

Mr. Stewart saw by the look on Paul's face that remonstrance would be useless, so he wished him good fortune, went with him to the door, then, going back to his desk, on which there

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was barely writing room, he lighted his bulldog pipe, and smoked steadily for a minute or two. But an imperative call for "copy" demanded immediate attention, so he dismissed the Bedford episode from his mind.

When Paul Bedford went to his lodgings that evening, he found a telegram which had been delivered some hours before. As such things were more of a novelty than in former days, he opened it with some degree of nervousness.

"Am expecting you at Astor House this evening. Don't fail.

"LEWIS MILLTRUM."

He looked at the telegram again and again, wondering what it meant. Then he re-read the address on the envelope to be certain it was intended for him. He was positive the Misses Milltrum had not returned from Europe, a letter from Bert Vernon received only the week before assuring him of that fact.

The more he thought the matter over, the deeper became his perplexity, for it never once occurred to him that the sender of the telegram might be related to the Milltrums of Chicago.

He concluded, however, that the easiest way to solve the difficulty was to go to the Astor House, so he took a Broadway car, and ere long was in the well-known hotel.

"Yes, Mr. Milltrum is here," the clerk replied. Then touching a gong on his desk, which was speedily answered by a hall boy, he said, "Take this gentleman to 73."

In response to the hall boy's knock, Paul heard a clear, sonorous "Come in!" and from the voice was prepared to meet a bluff, hearty Westerner, nor was he disappointed.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Bedford. Very glad. Been looking for you all the evening. Hope you are well. Sit down, here's a chair. Take a cigar. I want to have a talk with you. Was just beginning to think my telegram had gone astray. Have had three or four letters from my niece, inquiring about you. Left Chicago yesterday morning, came on specially to see you."

Mr. Milltrum bustled about the room, talking all the while, but contriving to give Paul a keen glance now and then, taking his measurement far more accurately than one would have imagined possible.

"What are you doing now?" he asked, after they had talked a few minutes.

"Nothing," Paul answered.

"Nothing! How is that?" This time he shot a piercing look from under his heavy eyebrows.

"It is rather a long story," Paul replied.

"Too much Saxby, perhaps?" Mr. Milltrum said, with a meaning smile.

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Paul looked keenly at Mr. Milltrum, but he might as well have looked at a graven image, so expressionless was his face.

"I am no longer connected with Mr. Saxby," Paul said, with a degree of iron in his voice.

"But you have been, which may account for many things," and again Mr. Milltrum's face had all the mobility of a stone carving.

"I am at a loss to understand . . ."

"Perhaps you are, but I'm not," Mr. Milltrum said, in his quick, nervous fashion. "But I didn't come all the way from Chicago to discuss Saxby. I have better business on hand. I want you to come in with us. We have just the place for you. Of course, we're not so all-fired smart as the people of this town, still everybody in Chicago isn't a fool. This place is all very well for men who have made their pile, any idiot can make money when he has money, but when a young fellow has only his wits, and out of them must get a living, the sooner he leaves New York the better. New York is a first-rate place in which to go bankrupt; it's a kind of fashion here, and no one seems to mind it, but if you want to get a start, come to Chicago with me. My nieces are set on it, and, for that matter, so am I. What's to hinder you taking a trial trip, at any rate? Meet me here to-morrow at noon; we can lunch together, and then get the Limited, which leaves at two. So good night. Glad to have met you,

and more glad you are coming with me to Chicago."

In his hearty, cordial way, Mr. Milltrum arranged everything, hardly giving Paul time to suggest a difficulty or frame a refusal, so that in less than an hour from his entering the Astor House, he was under engagement with the Milltrum Bros. of Chicago.

Next morning a district messenger was at the house of Mrs. Figgis, with a note for Paul. It was from Mr. Milltrum:

"DEAR MR. BEDFORD:—Your spare money is, no doubt, in the Savings Bank." Here Paul smiled grimly. "Let it stay there, and use the enclosed for such fittings as may be necessary. There are, though, two or three little stores in Chicago where odd fixings can be bought in case you happen to forget anything.

"Yours hastily,

"LEWIS MILLTRUM."

Paul hardly knew whether to be angry or pleased. The five twenty-dollar bills which Mr. Milltrum had enclosed were badly needed, more, indeed, than he was willing to admit, but the Virginian blood had not cooled any during the past months; if anything, it had grown hotter, for pride and poverty are twins, who love each other most strangely. But Virginian blood,

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along with its other good qualities, has a fair measure of sturdy common sense, so Paul accepted the money in the spirit Mr. Milltrum had sent it. Hence he was able to repossess himself of his mother's trinkets, his father's watch, and also make sundry purchases for his own personal comfort.

"Bless my soul, man, don't mention it!" Mr. Milltrum said, when Paul attempted to refer to the matter. "Why should you disturb your money in the Savings Bank? It couldn't be in a better place. I-keep some money there myself. Have ever since I was a boy. Besides, you may not care to stay in Chicago. This is only a trial trip."

His keen eyes had not failed to notice a modest gold chain with a neat charm, and an old-fashioned, massive gold watch, which he had not seen the night before, neither did he overlook certain articles of apparel that were unquestionably new.

Mr. Milltrum, according to Paul's estimate, was not far from sixty, but so hale and vigorous that the years only added to his strength as growth to a tree. He talked earnestly, ate heartily, smoked vigorously nearly all the way to Chicago; nor was his sleep that still, exquisite silence which makes the night one of delicious repose. None of the passengers, however, cherished any malice, for in the morning, though he was up early and his talk with the porter

was a housetop affair, rousing some dullards, who would fain have slept longer, his voice had so much of good cheer in it, and he diffused such a healthful, wholesome feeling through the car, that he was more than forgiven for his exertions during the night.

On reaching Chicago, Mr. Milltrum went to the "Auditorium," a hotel which surprised Paul, who thought that such buildings were only possible in New York.

"Yes, I live here," he said to Paul, as they were chatting in his apartment, one of the most desirable in the hotel, fronting on the avenue, and with a splendid view of the lake. "I'm a bachelor, you know, and I can have my boots blacked here, and get a morning paper without much trouble. As I said, Chicago, of course, isn't New York, but when one makes up his mind to it, he can put up with most anything."

The whimsical air with which Mr. Milltrum said this immensely amused Paul. He was beginning to enjoy Mr. Milltrum, whose sly pokes at New York and its pretensions were so good-natured that no one could be offended at them.

The next day Paul was taken to the offices of Milltrum Bros., where he received marked consideration.

"Pooh! No gratitude about it. We are not in the philanthropy business. Peggy, that's my niece, the one that's older than the younger one,

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— I daren't put it any other way, or they would each give me a hiding, — wrote me about you. Maud, that's the other one, she also wrote me about you. And so here you are. You think five thousand dollars a year is too much to start on? Well, I don't. And don't fret, for you'll earn every cent of it. We work hard here, young man. See if we don't."

Paul little thought, when helping the Misses Milltrum into one of the *Zidonia's* boats, giving them his ulster, and contriving as best he could to make them comfortable, that he was casting bread upon the waters, which would return in such form as this. But like a sensible fellow, he took the goods the gods so generously provided, and soon was comfortably installed as private secretary to Mr. Milltrum.

Through the good offices of Clarence Fillmore, Paul and Miriam frequently heard from each other, and though separated by several hundred miles, in heart they were nearer than ever before.

"I congratulate you, Paul, on being so pleasantly situated, and with such a good beginning in your new business. I cannot tell you how glad I am. Perhaps there is a little selfishness in my gladness, for I imagine that one of these days you will be sending for 'somebody' who would like to make a nice long visit in Chicago!

Indeed, I think the aforesaid 'somebody' would not object to living in Chicago! I was there during the Exposition, and stopped at the 'Auditorium,' so I can easily locate you. Every evening after dinner, instead of going to the piano and playing over some of your favorites, I take a trip westward, usually stopping off at Chicago, and visiting with you! I leave my insignificant body here to do the proprieties, winding up its talking-machine so that it can answer the usual round of questions; and sometimes I so arrange my hands that they hold a book, then droop my eyes as to seem intent on the page, but the real *me*, the *me* who loves you, does not remain in Pelham, oh, no! Have you not felt me steal into that little parlor of yours, sit down quietly somewhere near you, and just delight myself by looking at your dear face? In the daytime you are busy, so I don't trouble you *more than I can help*, but in the evening, when I know you are free from business, I get into my air-ship, and in two seconds, one if I am not delayed, I am with you. But what a lot of nonsense I am writing! Yet is it nonsense? If the spirit can leave the body during sleep, why not at other times? If an overwhelming emotion can so dominate the body as to make it insensible to fatigue or pain, why cannot love, to whom all other emotions are but as slaves to the genii of Aladdin's lamp, break through the body when

it pleases and hold communion with a love that is kindred to its own?

"Dear, dear, when will this pen of mine learn sense! I can see you smile, Paul, yes, I can; don't deny it, or, when 'somebody' comes to Chicago, sackcloth and ashes will be your portion. Not broadcloth and cigar ashes either, but the real thing.

"Doctor Barrington thinks I am not looking well! As my gallant knight, I expect you to avenge this terrible affront. He wants mamma to take me to the Adirondacks in May, but mamma thinks a trip to Europe will do just as well. I would rather go to Chicago!

"Papa has been South for some weeks. That may explain his failure to reply to your letter. It is now almost noon. Good-by. Will see you this evening!"

MIRIAM."

When Mr. Saxby returned from the South, after an extended business trip, he found Paul's letter awaiting him at Pelham. Having no idea of the young man's whereabouts, though the handwriting seemed familiar, he opened it without once suspecting who the writer might be.

"I am now in a position to renew the request made some months since, and hope most sincerely that you will give me the privilege of a hearing. It has been my good fortune to become associated with Milltrum Bros. of this city."

Mr. Saxby did not finish the letter, contenting himself with an angry glance at the signature.

"Damn that fellow," he muttered, "and with the Milltrums! I wish now he had gone to Hongkong. But I will crush him yet, and the Milltrums with him, no matter what it costs."

Mr. Saxby's face was not a pleasant study at that moment. Every foul passion of which a proud, vindictive nature was capable showed itself in the fierce gleam of his eye, the cruel set of his mouth, the merciless expression of his features, and clinching his fist, he struck the library table such a heavy blow that the bronze inkstand, a Christmas gift from Miriam, rattled under the shock.

"Damn him! Damn him!" he almost shouted again and again, "and damn the Milltrums! I had a heavy enough score to settle with them before this, but by Heaven! I'll —"

At dinner Mr. Saxby was very quiet, but it was not the quiet of fatigue or restfulness, the intensity of it forbade any such supposition.

"Did you know anything of this?" he asked Miriam, when they had gone to the library for their coffee, and the servants had retired. As he spoke he held out Paul Bedford's letter.

"What is it?" Miriam asked in return, though she saw the handwriting now so familiar to her.

"This letter from that Bedford fellow."

"You refer to Mr. Bedford, who spent part

of last winter here?" Miriam asked, in clear, bell-like tones, her eyes shining, and her face as though of white marble.

"Yes, Bedford, who did typewriting for me, and odd jobs about the office."

"Who saved your life when you were attacked by burglars, and served you like a slave all the weeks that you were helpless?"

Mrs. Saxby looked aghast as Miriam spoke, her voice even more vibrant than before.

"For which he was paid," Mr. Saxby coarsely responded. "Well paid, too."

"Yes, by being dismissed from your service. Turned out on a moment's notice. Then driven from New York as though he were a criminal."

How each word rang out!

"And finally secured employment in the office of my sworn enemy, a man who has left no stone unturned by which he might compass my downfall. To this man Mr. Bedford" — the sneer with which Mr. Saxby accompanied his "Mr. Bedford" was a fine piece of work — "has gone, and because he knows, or thinks he knows, something of my business, he has prevailed upon Milltrum of Chicago to give him a place in his office. Now he thinks he can dictate terms to me, and so he writes proposing marriage with you. He is an infamous scoundrel, a treacherous hound, and —"

"The man whom I have promised to marry,"

Miriam said, solemnly, rising from her chair, and standing proudly before her father.

"I would rather see you dead than the wife of Paul Bedford," Mr. Saxby replied, his face white with passion.

"You may, perhaps, have your wish, for I will never leave home without your consent. Of that you may be fully assured. But remember, nothing can ever weaken my love for Paul Bedford. Now please excuse me, I would like to retire to my own room."

Without waiting to hear her father's reply, Miriam walked slowly across the library, gently opened the door, and passed out, leaving Mr. Saxby with Paul Bedford's letter in his hands.

XI.

MR. SAXBY BECOMES ANXIOUS

“**N**O, I don’t know what the trouble is. Strange as it may seem, Mrs. Saxby, it appears as if Miriam had received some terrible shock. I know, of course, that such a thing is impossible, yet the symptoms all point in that direction. Suppose I ask Doctor Voxborough to meet me here to-morrow. I can arrange it so that Miriam won’t suspect anything. For my own sake as well as yours I would like to consult with Doctor Voxborough.”

Doctor Barrington’s face was clouded with anxiety as he spoke to Mrs. Saxby, who had been waiting for him in the reception-room. For some days Doctor Barrington had been in attendance on Miriam, and each visit only added to his perplexity.

“You don’t mean that Miriam’s case is really serious?” Mrs. Saxby asked, earnestly.

“I cannot say at this moment exactly how serious it is, but I would like to call in Doctor Voxborough.” There was a gravity in Doctor

Barrington's manner, which could not escape Mrs. Saxby.

"Wouldn't a change of air, a trip to Old Point Comfort, or perhaps to the South of France make her all right again?"

"I don't know whether she could now bear such a journey. Miriam has been running down for some time. You may remember my suggesting several weeks ago that you arrange for a visit to the Adirondacks at the first opportunity, which, perhaps, would have been the best thing to be done at that time. But let us have Doctor Voxborough's opinion."

"Of course, if that is your wish, but we have every confidence in you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Saxby, but in a case so serious as this, I would feel relieved if Doctor Voxborough could give me the benefit of his advice."

The next day Doctor Voxborough, an eminent specialist from New York, went with Doctor Barrington to Miriam's room, but the visit was so managed that Miriam never once suspected its real intent.

"I wish you could persuade him, Doctor Voxborough, to give me a cure for laziness," Miriam said, pleasantly, then smiling at Doctor Barrington, who was counting her pulse.

"You should say rather 'Physician, heal thyself,' for that is his own trouble, and one of many

years standing," Doctor Voxborough replied, coming over to the couch on which Miriam was lying.

"I am not as lazy as Doctor Voxborough — thinks I am," Doctor Barrington suggestively remarked, making his pause very effective.

So they chatted and talked, exchanging sallies of wit and playful humor, making their visit one of real pleasure to Miriam, who brightened up, and seemed more like herself than for some weeks. But the keen, practised eyes of Doctor Voxborough were busy all the while. On one pretence and another he got Miriam to talk about herself, humorously mostly, and making light of her sickness, but Doctor Voxborough never once lost sight of the purpose he had in view.

"I think you might allow an old gentleman the pleasure of holding your hand for a minute," he said, smilingly, taking the place vacated by Doctor Barrington, who had gone to a table ostensibly to write a prescription.

Miriam little thought how much the tips of his fingers could read as they were placed gently on her wrist.

Mrs. Saxby was again in the reception-room, but Doctor Voxborough had very little to say, allowing Doctor Barrington, as the family physician, to do most of the talking. But Doctor Voxborough rarely had much to say. Like most great physicians, he was not a fluent talker, but

what he lacked in speech he atoned for in marvellous skill. At lunch with Doctor Barrington he spoke with some freedom.

"A girl whose nervous conditions are so exquisitely balanced as those of Miss Saxby requires treatment which can neither be written nor defined. You are, of course, intimate in the Saxby home?"

"Very, have been for years. I attended Mrs. Saxby when Miriam was born."

As Doctor Barrington spoke he looked inquiringly at Doctor Voxborough.

"Have you reason to think that there is trouble of any kind?"

"Never heard of any, that is, anything serious."

"What have you heard? Miss Saxby, even at best, is naturally most sensitive, and would keenly feel things which others would toss aside."

"Some months ago there was an attempted burglary —"

"Shock number one," Doctor Voxborough remarked, quietly.

"And in the struggle Mr. Saxby received a severe wound."

"Shock number two."

"During the months that Mr. Saxby was confined to his room, a young man from the office, a mighty handsome fellow, Bedford by name,

acted as Mr. Saxby's secretary, coming to the house every evening, and naturally saw a great deal of Miss Saxby. There was some little gossip of course."

"Shock number three."

"When Mr. Saxby got better, whether he suspected anything or not I cannot say, but Bedford received an appointment at Hongkong."

"Shock number four."

"Since then it has been whispered that Bedford did not go to Hongkong, Mr. Saxby having dismissed him in London."

"Shock number five."

"You infer then —"

"That Miss Saxby is in a bad way, and if you can save her it will be little short of a miracle. Your treatment, thus far, has my unqualified approval, but I am afraid you have a very serious case on your hands."

Doctor Barrington went to the station with Doctor Voxborough, who promised to come out again the following week.

"From what Doctor Barrington said this morning I am beginning to be anxious about Miriam," Mrs. Saxby said to her husband when he returned from New York.

"Was he speaking for himself or for Doctor Voxborough?" Mr. Saxby asked, sharply.

"Both, I am afraid," Mrs. Saxby replied, with some feeling.

“Did they give you any intimation of what really ailed Miriam?”

Mr. Saxby, though loving Miriam with a passion little short of idolatry, was so enraged at her course with regard to Paul Bedford, that since the scene in the library, when she so fearlessly avowed her love for Paul, he treated her with marked disfavor. And so blinded was he by anger and prejudice that he refused to believe her illness anything but chagrin and disappointment, the result of his refusal to give a favorable reply to Paul Bedford's letter.

She was indignant, naturally so, at his treatment of Paul. He could at least have replied courteously, but this he failed to do, for he took Paul's letter and wrote at the foot of the page:

“This was opened by mistake, thinking it was from a correspondent in Chicago. I do not wish to hear from you again.”

So Paul got his letter back, envelope and all, whereupon he vowed that the next time he wrote to Mr. Saxby, Methuselah in point of age would be a mere infant as compared with him. But Paul didn't say anything of this to Miriam. It was Mr. Saxby himself who informed her of it.

Perhaps Mr. Saxby would not have acted so outrageously were it not that Mr. Milltrum had out-manceuvred him in a scheme to obtain possession of a Southern railroad upon which his eyes had rested covetously for some time. For

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this Mr. Saxby blamed Paul, as the negotiations were in progress while he was acting as his secretary. Paul, however, had nothing whatever to do with it, for there were some matters which Mr. Milltrum shared with no one, working them out in his own way. But this Mr. Saxby did not know; hence he charged Paul with treachery, and regarded him as the direct agent of Mr. Milltrum in securing this most desirable property.

It is true that as the weeks went on, and Paul saw with what persistence Mr. Milltrum thwarted Mr. Saxby in every possible way, he was tempted more than once to give up his position. It seemed like disloyalty to Miriam to be in the service of one who so relentlessly pursued her father. And many times he wished, when he knew of some big deal which was in progress, that he could have warned Mr. Saxby. Every fibre of Paul's manhood was tested to its full strength again and again. Fidelity to Mr. Milltrum seemed infidelity to Miriam. Then, on the other hand, he was under profound obligations to Mr. Milltrum, who had treated him with such generosity. Not once, and for this Paul was profoundly grateful, had Mr. Milltrum questioned him concerning Mr. Saxby, or his relations with Miriam. Paul sometimes wondered at this; but Mr. Milltrum, through his nieces, knew all about Paul's love-affairs, and though an old bachelor, he had not

quite forgotten a romance of his own early manhood.

This may have been the reason why he never sought Paul's assistance in his battles with Mr. Saxby, though there were times when such assistance, had Paul been free to give it, would have been of much value to him.

It is very easy to see that one defeat after another, and some of them costly, made Mr. Saxby still more bitter against Paul, for he invariably associated him with every move of Mr. Milltrum. And it is also easy to see why he was angry and indignant with Miriam, treating her with a sternness that was little short of cruelty.

But Mrs. Saxby's statement, based on the report of Doctor Barrington, alarmed him. He knew that Doctor Barrington would not have called in such an eminent physician as Doctor Voxborough without some reason for it. He had been troubled more or less during the day, and came home earlier than usual that he might learn the result of the consultation.

As Miriam was not able to come down to dinner, he went to her room early in the evening, something he had not done since receiving Paul Bedford's letter. She smiled gratefully as he went in, and though there was not a sign of reproach on her face, somehow he felt ashamed of his harshness, and resolved to atone for it if it were possible.

"Well, my little girl, how do you think you are?" he asked, tenderly, after he had bent over the couch, and kissed her.

"I told Doctor Barrington I was merely lazy," she answered, looking up into his face as he sat beside the couch, meantime holding his hand in hers.

"Which he believed, of course, for he knows you pretty well."

Mr. Saxby noticed a marked change in Miriam; her face was thinner, her cheeks had a feverish flush, her eyes seemed to have an unnatural light, her voice, while smooth and distinct, was weak, and her breath caught at times as though she were in pain.

"I asked him to prescribe for it," she said, flashing at her father one of her old-time roguish glances, "but Doctor Voxborough suggested that Doctor Barrington was afflicted with the same trouble."

"So you didn't get the prescription?"

"No."

"I wonder if I could do anything for you?"

"You can. I wish you would take me in your arms, and let me rest a little while. I am tired lying here."

Mr. Saxby took her up from the couch, and going over to a big armchair sat down, holding her in his arms, as he had often done when she was a little girl.

"It is so nice to be back here again," she murmured, softly, nestling her head upon his breast, then giving a happy little sigh.

For reply, Mr. Saxby drew her closely to him, then bent down and kissed her forehead.

"You have been a very good papa to me," she whispered, "and I am so sorry at having vexed or distressed you." Her breath caught as she finished the sentence ending in a little sob.

"Please don't speak of these things now," he said, huskily.

"But, papa, I must speak of them, and now that we are alone let me tell you that I love you as dearly as I ever did; and you will please forgive me for having hurt you."

"Miriam, darling, there is nothing to forgive. You are only distressing yourself."

"Yes, papa, there is something to forgive. You remember how I spoke about Paul. That was very wrong of me, but I was nervous and angry, and I have been so sorry ever since. I cried all that night. But, papa, I can't help loving Paul. Don't take your arms away, please. And he is not to blame. I know you think he is, but indeed he is not. So I want you to forgive him."

"But, Miriam, only think of what you are asking!"

"Yes, papa, I know. But you are a great,

strong, rich man, and he is a poor boy, who has to make his way in the world. I told you I would never leave you without your consent, so I wish you would forgive Paul. I am not well, papa. Sometimes I think that I won't get better."

"Hush, Miriam, hush!"

"Since I have been lying here, and so much alone every day, I have had time to think over lots of things. Please remember, papa, that I am not ungrateful. You have been very kind to me. But I don't want a single cloud to rest on either your heart or mine. And if anything happens to me, papa, I want you to be good to Paul. Won't you, please?"

Something in Miriam's voice filled Mr. Saxby with dread. In simplicity and artlessness she had gone back to her early girlhood, and she used phrases and expressions which he remembered her using years before; but she spoke with a solemnity as of a distant bell tolling at midnight. Her voice had a far-away sound. She seemed as if leaving him. There were no tears in her eyes, but there was something far deeper than tears in her words.

Before he could reply, Mrs. Saxby, who had been summoned to meet some callers, special friends of Miriam, who had just heard of her sickness, returned to the room, so nothing more was said.

"Come again to-morrow evening, you dear

old papa," Miriam said, fondly, as Mr. Saxby placed her again on the couch.

It was late, very late that night when Mr. Saxby retired. After leaving Miriam's room he went to the library, remaining there for some hours. Next morning his face looked drawn and anxious, and on reaching the city, instead of going direct to his office, he went to Doctor Voxborough, where he stayed over an hour. Business had little interest for Mr. Saxby that day. Mr. Crewe could hardly get a word from him. Very curtly he told Mr. Walters not to disturb him with matters of correspondence. He went out to lunch because he had an appointment of some importance, but after disposing of the matter which the appointment involved, he excused himself, and took an early afternoon train for home.

XII.

A WEDDING

AFTER Doctor Voxborough had made his second visit to Pelham, he frankly told Doctor Barrington nothing could save Miriam. He said she was wasting away, and not slowly either, and only with extreme care could her life be prolonged through the summer.

This was sad news for Doctor Barrington, though he had feared from Doctor Voxborough's opinion at their first consultation that he would pronounce Miriam's case to be hopeless. But how much more sad was it for Mrs. Saxby! At first she would not believe it, and with a voice almost angry in its tone, and eyes flashing indignantly, she told him that such a thing could not be. But when she saw Doctor Barrington's lips tremble, and then his face turned away to hide the tears that were rolling down his cheeks, her anger died away, and she sobbed as though her heart would break. She forgot everything save the one terrible fact that Miriam — the babe who had cuddled in her arms, the child whose prattle

had been such a delight, the girl whose merry voice had filled the home with gladness, the daughter who had grown up into glorious womanhood — was about to leave her, and that soon nothing would remain but a tender memory.

“Oh, Doctor Barrington, what shall I do? I can’t let her go. She must stay here with me. Oh, dear God, won’t you spare my Miriam! Please, doctor, can’t you think of something that would help her. Oh, Miriam! Miriam!”

Doctor Barrington tried to comfort her, but his voice quivered and broke, and it was with a sad face that he entered his carriage and drove away. When he got to the gate, he looked up to the window at which Miriam usually sat in her room, and he saw her wave her hand to him, — a poor, wasted hand it was, — and though he smiled in reply, yet it was such a tender, pitiful smile that Miriam wondered at it.

Mr. Saxby received the verdict of Doctor Voxborough in mute, helpless despair. He was too terribly stricken even to open his lips. He asked no questions; he made no appeal; no tear dimmed his eye, no quiver moved his lips. He stood listening to Doctor Barrington as a man carved in stone, but over that stone face there passed a cloud, and behind that cloud the sun went down, never to rise again.

After Doctor Barrington had gone, he sat down in the same chair in which Miriam had

sat the last night she was in the library. How well he remembered that night! Would not the memory of it forever leave its scar upon his soul? That night he had taunted her, flung the name of Paul Bedford in her face, gloried in having sent back his letter with an insulting message, called him a fortune-hunter, whose love for her was a hollow sham, sneered at her tears, and made sport of her whining, baby face. Everything came back to him. Like pictures thrown upon the canvas by the intense and merciless calcium light, so the past weeks and months came before him. How cruel he had been! How remorseless, how vindictive! And now she was dying; a few weeks more and his Miriam would be gone forever.

He went to a drawer of the library table, the one whose key always hung on his watch-chain, and took out a revolver, and placed the cold barrel against his forehead, but he merely smiled, and put the revolver back into its case.

"No, not that," he muttered, "that is a coward's refuge."

Then he went back again to the chair on which he had been sitting, and stood for a few moments, irresolute, as if debating with himself, but finally he knelt at the chair, and, burying his face in his hands, uttered a groan of fearful despair. For more than an hour he knelt there, not praying, or even trying to pray, but simply kneeling

at the place where Miriam had last sat, a helpless, stricken man.

"Papa, I would like to see Paul," Miriam said one day, as Mr. Saxby was holding her in his arms.

"Shall I send for him?" he asked, gently.

"I wish you would," again nestling her head on his breast, and snuggling closer to him.

In an hour Paul was reading:

"Come at once — Miriam very sick. We all wish to see you.
GASTON SAXBY."

"Certainly, certainly. The very first train. Don't hesitate a minute. Hope it isn't anything serious. Stay as long as you want to. Make a wedding-trip of it if you can," and Mr. Milltrum bustled about the office, hardly allowing himself a moment's rest until he had seen Paul in the train that evening.

There was no embarrassment whatever in the meeting of Paul and Mr. Saxby. When men are in the valley and shadow of death they are not troubled with trifles. Things of greater moment have control of them.

Mr. Saxby, therefore, simply held out his hand and said:

"Thank you for coming so promptly, Mr. Bedford," to which Paul replied, "Thank you for sending for me, Mr. Saxby."

Neither referred to the past then or at any other time. There was too much at stake to bother with explanations or apologies. They were fighting for Miriam's life; anything less had no value.

"It might do good; it certainly could do no harm. So far as I am concerned, I approve most heartily." This was Doctor Voxborough's reply to Doctor Barrington, who at Paul Bedford's urgent request had spoken of the possibility of Miriam's marriage.

As a drowning man clutches a straw, blindly struggling for anything that may save him from death, so they all eagerly reached for this last hope, with a fervent desire that in some way it might uncoil the fatal arms that were dragging Miriam to the grave. The thought of refusal never once occurred to Mr. Saxby.

It was a strange, sad wedding. Miriam had been carried from her room to the parlor, reserving her strength for the ceremony, and her pale, sweet face looked like that of an angel. She insisted on being dressed in bridal costume, smilingly remarking that the woman who didn't try to look well at such a time was disloyal to her sex. She arranged that Doctor Keithburn, who had baptized her in infancy, and at whose hands she had received her first communion, should perform the marriage service. Both Mr. and Mrs. Saxby wondered why Paul, who car-

ried out her suggestions for the ceremony, should have placed Doctor Keithburn in the window recess, but they did not know that Miriam and Paul, as they received the nuptial blessing, knelt on the very spot where they had first kissed each other.

There were no guests save Doctor Barrington and Clarence Fillmore, but at Miriam's request the servants were brought in that they might witness the ceremony. No one outside would have imagined that the Saxby mansion was the scene of a wedding, for there was no coming and going of carriages; no stream of people entering the stately hall; no babel of young voices, filling the house everywhere; no crowd waiting on the steps to assail the departing couple with showers of rice; no gay revellers to whom a marriage feast is an unmixed joy.

"I am yours now, Paul, yours, yours," she whispered, with a happy smile, as he almost carried her to the dining-room, where she had pleaded for some recognition of her bridal day.

"Yes, mine, Miriam, mine, now and forever," he said, solemnly, in a voice intended only for her.

Clarence Fillmore, good fellow that he was, tried to enliven the dining-table, and Doctor Barrington contributed his part, so the hour passed off with less restraint than had been feared. Still, Miriam was much exhausted with

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excitement and weakness, and soon went to her room.

For a few days she actually gave promise of recovery, and told Paul she would soon be ready for their wedding-trip.

"I want to go somewhere on the Mediterranean; it doesn't make much difference where, if I can only be within sight of the water. A nice little villa with a garden where we can have flowers and fruit, and where we won't be bothered and troubled with a lot of people."

So Paul sent for the plans of ships sailing to Genoa and Naples, and they talked about their trip with as much pleasure as two children.

Even Doctor Barrington was hopeful for a little while, and spoke of it to Doctor Voxborough. But he said nothing. As the summer wore on, it became very evident that Miriam was fast losing all she had gained, and the end could not be far distant.

But her courage was unflagging, and her hope as vigorous as ever.

"You must not be discouraged, Paul. I am ashamed of you. Just see how my hands are filling out. That ring was too large when you first put it on, and two or three times it nearly came off. Now see."

But there came a day early in September when she nestled for the last time in her father's arms. She had wasted away so that Mr. Saxby

could hold her as he had done years before, and her face had the sweet childlike look of her early girlhood.

“I can’t stay much longer with you, papa; I wish I could, for I never loved you so dearly as I do now. But I am so tired. You won’t forget your promise about Paul. Poor Paul! I am very sorry for him. Put me down on the couch, papa, and tell mamma and Paul I want to see them. How dark it is getting all at once! Why, the sun was shining brightly a few minutes ago.”

They gathered about her couch, Mrs. Saxby with the tears so blinding her that she could hardly see; Mr. Saxby with his face gray as ashes, and his lips trembling so that he dare not trust himself to speak; Paul kneeling at her side, holding her hands in his; Doctor Keithburn tenderly saying the divine words, — “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,” and with a sweet smile Miriam went home to be with God.

BOOK II.
JUDITH

I.

JUDITH

FATHER TIME, sly old rascal that he is! rarely fails to deal kindly with maiden ladies who do not advertise their birthdays, and whose means permit the services of an artistic dress-maker. Hence we find the Misses Milltrum, after a lapse of five years, much the same as when we saw them start from the Victoria Station in London, on their way to the South of France. Indeed, strict truth would insist that the years had made ample compensation for the slight increase in their age. Miss Milltrum is decidedly less angular, of healthier look, and, while the old-time haughty expression in part remains, her smile has more warmth and pleasantness than in former days. As for Maud, the years have treated her graciously. Not that she is less definite of speech, or fails to express her opinions with both vigor and freedom, but her voice is mellow, her face is kindly, and her words have little of rankle in them.

That neither of them married was a cause of much wonder to their friends. It was not surely for lack of opportunity. Admirers they both had, and to spare, ranging all the way from bright young cavaliers, whose highly polished boots lacked yet their golden spurs, to men of mature years, whose highly polished brows extended midway over their heads.

"Where is Judith?" Miss Milltrum asked, turning from the quaint, old-fashioned desk where she had been writing, and addressing Maud, who was critically examining a bit of old lace.

"She went out with Mr. Bothwell over an hour ago," Maud answered, smoothing the lace gently on her knee.

"She goes out a good deal with Mr. Bothwell," Miss Milltrum said, as she sealed an envelope, using mauve-colored wax and a Dresden-handled monogram.

"Yes, but Judith is abundantly able to take care of herself. No need to trouble about her affairs." As Maud spoke she lifted the piece of lace, and held it out between her hands.

"But Mr. Bothwell is exceedingly attentive to Judith," Miss Milltrum observed, after a short pause.

"Very; he seems to be in earnest."

Maud now folded up the bit of lace, and looked inquiringly at her sister.

“Which is more, you think, than can be said of Judith?”

“No, I don’t mean that. And yet I hardly know what I do mean. Judith puzzles me. She is a mystery, and has been ever since she came to this house. At times, I am positive she is fond of Mr. Bothwell. But I think she is more ambitious than many would imagine. If I don’t misjudge her, Peggy, she would sacrifice almost everything to carry out her own wishes.”

“What is bred in the bone —”

“Exactly. And she is not likely to prove an exception.”

“But from Mr. Bothwell’s appearance and pretensions he could probably give her a good home. He must have a large income to keep up his present style of living. Bert Vernon says Mr. Bothwell’s apartment at the Sembrada is one of the most expensive in the house, and furnished without regard to cost.”

“Very likely, and the ‘turn-outs’ with which he comes for Judith are good enough for any one, nevertheless —”

Without finishing her sentence, Maud got up and went over to the window, where she remained standing, following with interest the stream of carriages moving along the avenue.

“You are not specially fond of Mr. Bothwell?”. Miss Milltrum said, or rather asked.

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"Just about as fond as you are, Peggy. I don't think either of us is desperately in love with him."

"Why don't you like him, Maud?"

"Why don't you like him, Peggy?"

"I never said I didn't like him."

"And does a woman need to say all she thinks, especially if that woman is Peggy Milltrum? Since the day you first met Mr. Bothwell on Clarence Fillmore's yacht until this hour, you have never liked him. My sweet sister, you may deceive the elect, whoever they are, goodness knows, I don't, but you can't deceive me."

"Why, Maud, whatever put such a notion into your head? Haven't I always been most gracious to Mr. Bothwell, and isn't he coming here to dinner this evening at my special desire?"

"You are a veritable saint, Peggy, or, if you prefer it, a sweet, artless maiden, and you can hoodwink Uncle Lewis, and even lead Paul Bedford astray, but I know you too well, Peggy."

Then they looked at each other and laughed pleasantly.

After a pause, Miss Milltrum said:

"It is almost five o'clock. Unless Judith shortens her drive she will hardly have time to

dress for dinner. She knows we are expecting some friends?"

"Yes, I told her, and she won't forget it. You can always depend on Judith for such an arrangement of frocks and frills as may be necessary."

Judith Carreau, of whom the Misses Milltrum were now speaking, was virtually a member of the Milltrum household, and had been for some time. It had come about from a letter written to Mr. Milltrum by Judith's mother, a letter which, after being read, was carefully put away with Mr. Milltrum's most cherished possessions.

When Mr. Milltrum saw the writing on the envelope his face flushed, then paled to deathly gray, and his hand so trembled that the letter rustled between his fingers. And no wonder, for that letter seemed like a message from the dead. With invisible hands the curtain of the departed years was drawn aside, and in an instant he went back to a time when dainty little notes in that same handwriting had come to him almost every day. But that was thirty years ago!

He had gone South on a business trip soon after becoming partner in a struggling little concern, and when in New Orleans became acquainted with Kate Dumont, the daughter of a prominent merchant in that city. How beau-

tiful she was! And even more fascinating than beautiful! There seemed a positive witchery in her every movement. The poise of her dainty head, the grace of her shapely form, the flash from her sparkling eyes, the curve of her tempting lips, cast a spell upon Lewis Milltrum, from which he could not escape. Gladly he lingered all the winter in New Orleans, to be within the circle of her presence.

For months he worshipped her in silence, not daring to speak lest she would send him away. He had not much to offer her save the eager devotion of his soul, but with her as an inspiration, he felt certain of making his way to fame and fortune. At length his heart overflowed itself, and while Kate Dumont was wilful and capricious, the manly, earnest words of Lewis Milltrum did not fall on unheeding or indifferent ears.

She promised to wait for him, and when he returned North, the thought of making her a home was the ambition that aroused every energy of his being.

For a time her letters were sweet, tender, hopeful, all, in fact, that the most ardent lover could desire. Then they began to decline, and take on a formal tone, at length ceasing altogether.

He wrote anxiously, lovingly, passionately, again and again, but in vain. His partner be-

ing dangerously ill at the time, and business affairs calling for special care, he could not go to New Orleans, though his heart was strained almost beyond endurance.

Unable to bear the suspense any longer, he wrote confidentially to a friend, asking him to make inquiries. The reply was a terrible shock, for he learned that Victor Carreau, a handsome, dashing fellow, reputed to be immensely wealthy, had won the favor of Miss Dumont, and their marriage was arranged for an early day in the coming month. Lewis Milltrum looked at that letter as though horror-stricken. It seemed impossible that such a thing could be.

But when other letters came, the poor fellow was forced to accept the awful truth. Then a deep, terrible silence fell upon him. He wrote no letter of angry expostulation; neither did he send any hollow, unmeaning congratulations. He was too proud to so demean himself. But on the morning of Miss Dumont's wedding-day, a little package marked "strictly personal" was brought to her room.

Thinking it contained some dainty wedding-gift, or bit of jewelry intended for her special use, she opened it eagerly, only to find every note and letter she had written Lewis Milltrum, the flower, now crushed and withered, she had given him on the evening he had declared his love for her, and also some little tokens she

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had sent him after he had left New Orleans. There was not a line or word from him, even the writing on the wrapper was in a strange hand. At first she was angry, and a hot, indignant flush swept over her proud face, and she flung the package on the floor. This caused some of the letters to fall under her eyes, and she could not but recall the time when she had written them. Then she read one and another, weeping bitterly all the while. A strange way, surely, for a woman to spend the morning hours of her wedding-day! But she went to church at the appointed time, responded distinctly in the service, smiled bravely at the reception in her father's house, and later in the day went off in a most becoming travelling-costume; but if Victor Carreau had only known how often his bride thought of the package of letters received that morning, and of the man to whom she had written them only a few months before, his handsome face might not have worn such a gracious, self-satisfied expression.

All this, and much more, passed through Mr. Milltrum's mind as he sat at his desk with Kate Carreau's unopened letter in his hand.

Finally he opened it and read:

“MY DEAR LEWIS:—It is too late to ask your forgiveness, neither would it matter much to me now, as I have only a few hours to live.

Oh, Lewis, what fearful mistakes we make at times through our own folly and selfishness! But it is not of myself that I am now writing, and as I shall have gone into the land of shadows before this letter reaches you, please, by the memory of other and happier days, grant my dying request.

“Mr. Carreau, before he died, made some unfortunate investments, and little remains now, very little indeed. Things are much involved, and unless some one interferes, my daughter Judith is liable to suffer serious wrong. But I cannot write. I am too weak. I want you to become Judith’s guardian. Don’t refuse me, Lewis. I wish I could see you again. Good-bye. And as a token that you forgive me, help Judith.

“KATE.”

There was no hustling or bustling in Mr. Milltrum’s office the day he received Mrs. Carreau’s letter. Paul Bedford, who had travelled several hundred miles to talk over some special business with him, saw at a glance that Mr. Milltrum was seriously troubled about something, so he went out, saying he would return the following day.

But Mr. Milltrum was not in when Paul called. Nor was he in for several days. And more singular still, no one knew where he had

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gone, or when he would return. He made a long journey during those days, going South as far as New Orleans, a city he had not visited for thirty years, then returning home by way of New York, where he saw his nieces, holding with them a serious and prolonged conversation. What this trip cost him will never be known. Money was by far the least part of it. A visit to a freshly made grave—for Kate Carreau died the next day after writing to him—cost him more than all else, and if any one had seen him standing at that grave with reverently uncovered head and quivering lips, he would have turned away, lest he intrude upon the sorrow of a deeply stricken man.

Hardly less affecting was his first meeting with Judith. He had prepared himself for the guardianship of a young girl,—for Mrs. Carreau's letter gave no hint of Judith's age,—but he found instead a young woman, the living image of her mother, and just as he remembered her in all the glory of her wondrous beauty. He looked at Judith with startled eyes, and when she moved towards him he stepped back in sheer amazement.

"You are Mr. Milltrum," she said, with a soft, sweet voice, one which shot back every bolt in his heart, for, to him, it was Kate Dumont who was speaking.

"And you are —" he almost said "Kate,"

the familiar name fairly trembled on his tongue.

"Judith," she answered, with a sad smile, gently extending her hand.

"I have come at the request of your mother," he said, slowly, and speaking with difficulty. "You know, I presume, that she sent for me."

"I know that she wrote to you. Your coming so soon is a kindness I hardly dared to expect." Robed in deep black, with a face startlingly like that of her mother, and speaking in tones which affected him most strangely, Judith instantly made her way into Mr. Milltrum's heart, and he was glad that Mrs. Carreau had placed her daughter under his care.

He remained South long enough to find out the exact condition of affairs, and adjust everything to the best possible advantage. But there was little to adjust. At no time had Victor Carreau been a rich man, — showy, and of expensive habits, he had given the impression of wealth, but his possessions were largely speculative, and by no means as valuable as people imagined. As the more practical ways of the North found favor, Victor Carreau's visions obtained less credence, and his reign as a financier came to an end. Then he lost control of himself, going down step by step, haunting low gambling dens, common grogeries, finally becoming involved in transactions more desperate

than honest. At length he died a poor, pitiable wreck, leaving Mrs. Carreau and Judith to struggle as best they could.

Fortunately, a remnant of Mrs. Carreau's wedding portion remained, a pin-money arrangement insisted on by Mr. Dumont, so she was not altogether penniless, but it was a narrow, pinching life, and all the more galling because of the bitter contrast with former years.

Without saying anything to Judith, Mr. Milltrum paid off some mortgages on which foreclosure was threatened; took care of other debts long outstanding; discharged the medical and funeral obligations, thus relieving her of all personal burdens, and at the same time securing for her a small income from the property. Then he proposed that she come North, and, for a time at any rate, make her home with his nieces in New York. This suggestion Judith gladly accepted. She was anxious to leave the scenes of her humiliation and poverty. She, therefore, willingly accompanied Mr. Milltrum; indeed, she seemed eager to get away from New Orleans.

On arriving in New York, the Misses Milltrum gave her a cordial welcome, making her as far as possible a member of their family. But as neither of these ladies had any romance connected with Kate Dumont, and as they were both tolerably keen of vision, they soon made certain discoveries regarding Judith Carreau,

which gave them a fair estimate of her character. But they said nothing of this to Mr. Milltrum. He had told them enough of his story to make an appeal both affecting and powerful. They knew that in Mr. Milltrum's heart Judith's mother had a holy shrine, to which he brought a devotion as constant as it was beautiful.

And so, while Judith was weighed in the balance, perhaps a little too critically, for the sake of the dear old man to whom they were devoted, they tried to make the best of everything.

"There is the carriage coming up the avenue," Miss Milltrum said, glancing out of the window, for the house standing on the corner, and having large bay-windows, commanded an extensive view.

"I told you Judith would be here in good season," Maud remarked, "not all the king's horses nor all the king's men, Mr. Bothwell included, could keep her out beyond the time."

"Aren't you a little severe with her, Maud?"

"Why Peggy, there are lots of good things in Judith. I —"

Maud didn't finish the sentence, for at that moment Judith entered the room.

II.

A DINNER - PARTY

MR. MILLTRUM was standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire, after the manner of an English country gentleman, only his hands were in his pockets instead of holding his coat-tails. Miss Milltrum was snugly ensconced in an easy-chair, one of the most comfortable in her cozy sitting-room. They had been discussing various matters which led up to Mr. Milltrum saying :

“ Maud, in her last few letters, has mentioned a Mr. Bothwell. Who is he, Peggy ? ”

“ A gentleman we met on Mr. Fillmore’s yacht at the races last season. ”

“ But that doesn’t tell me who he is. What do you think of him ? Do you like him ? ”

Mr. Milltrum rarely contented himself with a single question.

“ He is fairly good-looking, anywhere from thirty to thirty-five, and as agreeable and well-mannered as men usually are. ”

Miss Milltrum accompanied her reply with a non-committal smile.

"Peggy, you have a positive genius for answering questions. What a witness you would make in a court-room! How the lawyers would enjoy you! I didn't ask you about Mr. Bothwell's looks or manners, but who he is, and what you think of him?"

Though speaking in a bantering tone, Mr. Milltrum was really serious.

"Honestly, Uncle Lewis, I know almost nothing of Mr. Bothwell. I met him first, as I told you, at the yacht races. Then again at the Fillmores', where we went to dinner. After that we ran across him a number of times. Bert Vernon asked us to send him a card for one of our gatherings. Naturally, he called after that. But he is coming here this evening, and you can form your own opinion of him."

"From what Maud says, I infer that he is attentive to Judith?"

There was a strain of anxiety very audible in this question.

"That, perhaps, is easily explained. Judith, of course, has not gone out anywhere since coming to New York. Our friends all know that she is in mourning for her mother."

Here Mr. Milltrum looked at the rug, drawing in his lips after a fashion peculiar to himself.

"Consequently, she has not seen many people.

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Mr. Bothwell has been quite friendly, taking her driving a few times, but only the usual round in Central Park."

"Nothing extraordinary in that." The strain of anxiety in Mr. Milltrum's voice had sensibly declined.

"No, but Maud, not having outgrown her romantic notions, has probably attached more importance to Mr. Bothwell's courtesies than he intended."

"Very likely, but Judith is sure to receive considerable attention sooner or later. With the exception of yourself, Peggy, — well, I will add Maud, seeing how handsomely she is flounced and furbelowed, — I don't remember ever meeting a more attractive-looking woman than Judith."

Maud, who had entered the room while Mr. Milltrum was speaking, made an elaborate curtsey, in recognition of her uncle's compliment. Miss Milltrum smiled pleasantly, glancing at her sister, whose gown was not unlike her own, and equally becoming. Then they went down-stairs, for it was almost dinner-time.

Paul Bedford was the first to arrive, which might be expected, his relations with the Milltrums being far from those of an ordinary guest. He has changed perceptibly since we last saw him, though there is the same pleasant smile and the same rich voice, but he looks older than his years would warrant, and has an air of maturity

for which we are not prepared. His hair is not so luxuriant as when Miriam at times would twist it around her slender fingers, and, if one looked closely here and there, signs of gray might be seen. Though only turned thirty, his face has lines of care, also that firm, set look, which comes to men whose lives are earnest and serious. His eyes have a sharper gleam than in the olden days, while his bearing has more of reserve.

These five years have meant much to Paul Bedford. After Miriam's death, he gave himself up to business with singular devotion, throwing into it an energy which seemed inexhaustible. Soon Mr. Milltrum discovered that Paul had rare gifts for organization, so he allowed him to work out certain plans, which proved marvellously successful. Then he gave him larger opportunities, which resulted in the same way. The next step was an interest in the firm, and this so aroused the ambition of the young partner that the business increased at a prodigious rate. Paul went into everything, — mines, railroads, ships, sometimes taking what other men considered serious risks, but never failing to come out on the right side of the market, and with profits that amazed Mr. Milltrum. Sometimes the old gentleman shook his head warningly, but Paul only smiled, and as the results more than justified his course, Mr.

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Milltrum gradually allowed him to have his way.

His prescience was simply amazing. Rarely was he caught tripping. Men of suave address and tempting speech came with schemes that were most plausible, but in a glance he would see the fatal weakness of their plan. Combinations at which Wall Street looked on in wonder, Paul carried through with apparent ease, and there was hardly a firm within sound of old Trinity chimes which would not have eagerly welcomed him as a partner.

"Mr. Bedford seems to be having things his own way," Mr. Crewe said one day to Mr. Saxby, after Paul had made a clean sweep in Wall Street, causing some men to dance a lively tune, and pay the piper proportionately.

"Youth is sometimes reckless," Mr. Saxby replied, looking up from his desk at Mr. Crewe, who had brought in the latest Wall Street bulletin.

"But Mr. Bedford is never reckless; he is daring, wonderfully so; throws himself against some of the strongest combinations I have ever known, but everything is so planned that he must succeed. Blixter and Blexter dropped at least a million in their last fight with him."

With the Saxbys Paul maintained a merely formal relation, for he keenly remembered the harshness with which they had treated Miriam,

only repenting when she lay at the gates of death.

Mr. Saxby had several times urged him to come to New York, offering him strong inducements, but when he thought of Miriam, his heart turned to stone.

Small wonder, therefore, that the years have so changed him. Yet he is no less handsome than of yore, and as we see him talking in his grave, dignified way with Miss Milltrum, he seems just such a man as many women would love with a passion stronger than death.

Next to Paul Bedford, in point of arrival, was Mr. Gerald Bothwell, a gentleman who has already provoked some discussion in the Milltrum household, and who may cause even more.

Mr. Bothwell is not as tall as Paul Bedford, but of broader shoulders, deeper chest, and so formed as to suggest great physical strength. Most women would consider him handsome, but the more critical, particularly after a close scrutiny, might regard him with less favor. His eyes were large, but restless, and so heavily browed as to give the appearance of peering rather than openly looking. His mouth was partly hidden by a jet black mustache, which drooped gracefully at the ends, but nothing could hide the positive set of his lips, or the sense of power they conveyed. Nature had failed to proportion his neck, and this was a great pity, for

he had a splendid head, massive, shapely, imposing, but losing much of its impressiveness, because it rested so near to his shoulders. There was something about him which indicated tremendous force of will, and also a disposition which would not easily brook restraint.

In the groups now forming might be noticed Clarence Fillmore, stouter, ruddier, fond of yachting as ever, and his wife, whom we knew as Kitty Vernon. Kitty is trim and tailor-made, as a Boston woman never fails to be, though, despite the carefully fitted gown, she has a matronly look, which, however, detracts nothing from her appearance.

At the right moment Judith came in, that moment when, for some unaccountable reason, conversation drops away, and the guests wait expectantly. As Paul had frequently heard Mr. Milltrum speak of Miss Carreau, naturally he had some desire to meet her. Though taller than the average woman, Judith was of such superb figure, her bearing so graceful that her height seemed in exquisite proportion, while, if she did not suggest the dainty ways and feminine graces usually so much admired, her gracious air more than supplied their absence.

Her forehead was low and broad, crowned with a wealth of hair black and shiny as coal. Her eyes, large and dark, conveyed that delicious languorous expression peculiar to those of South-

ern blood. If seen in outline, her features might hint at Semitic ancestry, but in full view, especially when lighted by a smile, or stirred by conversation, she revealed a beauty as strange as it was dazzling. Her dress of black *crêpe de chine*, unrelieved by flower or jewel, was in sharp contrast with the brilliant costumes of the other ladies present, but as a foil to her faultless neck and shoulders, nothing could be more effective.

In the pairing off, Judith was placed with Paul, a proper arrangement under the circumstances, but by no means pleasing to Mr. Bothwell, though only Judith saw the angry light which, for a moment, flamed in his eyes. If Maud Milltrum had seen it, she might not have smiled so pleasantly at Mr. Bothwell when he took her in to dinner.

"I have heard Mr. Milltrum speak of you so often that I have already formed a most delightful acquaintance," Paul observed, as they were going to the dining-room.

"Mr. Milltrum has been very kind to me," Judith replied, in a tone just above a whisper. Paul instantly recognized the delightful Southern accent, so different from the harsh, abrupt voice of the West.

"And he has been more than kind to me," Paul said, looking gratefully at Mr. Milltrum, who, at that moment, was leading Peggy to her place.

Judith made no reply, possibly for lack of

opportunity, as the company was being seated, a time never favorable for definite conversation.

"Besides our mutual gratitude to Mr. Milltrum, we have another bond of sympathy," Paul remarked, quietly.

"And that is — ?" As Judith spoke, she looked at Paul, her face lighted with a smile, and her eyes glowing with mysterious fire.

So strangely beautiful did she appear that Paul was positively startled. In the parlor, when going through the round of introductions, her face was in comparative repose, and the impression on Paul was that of coldness, a proud, imperious consciousness of her beauty, and the homage to which it was entitled.

But now she seemed transfigured. Her face was illumined. Besides her beauty, there was a fascination in her every movement, which Paul could not but feel.

"We are both from the South, though you may not recognize the claim of a Virginian," Paul answered, returning her smile, a movement which did not escape the watchful eyes of Mr. Bothwell.

"Oh, gladly! my mother's people came from Virginia! Perhaps you are acquainted in Evington?"

"Certainly I am. My home was in Charlemont, not more than twenty miles from Evington."

"I once went with my mother to visit the Campbells, but that was when I was a little girl, a long time ago," Judith said, giving to her words a reminiscent tinge, more playful than serious.

"And I went with my mother, and more than once, to visit the Campbells, but that was when I was a little boy, a long, long time ago," Paul said, in the same vein.

"My mother was related to the Campbells," Judith said, seriously.

"It was my father who had that privilege," Paul answered, just as seriously.

"Then you are a — sort of — cousin," Judith said, again looking at Paul, her eyes glowing even more strangely than before, and her smile wondrously rich and radiant.

"Any sort of a cousin, provided you acknowledge the relationship," Paul answered, gallantly. Then he did what most men would have done, — gave her hand a cousinly little squeeze, which was duly acknowledged, and returned in kind. And why not? There was no reason for a most exquisite flush to steal into Judith's face, or for Paul to feel excited in the least. Nevertheless, such was the case, though probably no one noticed it except Mr. Bothwell, who pretended to be listening intently to something Miss Milltrum was saying. And Miss Milltrum was always worth listening to, and never more than then, for she was telling the story of a woman who gravely

assured her that she was distinctly conscious of a prior existence, and at times had the most vivid remembrances of people, conversations, and incidents connected with her former life.

As Paul listened, his mind went back to that eventful night in London, when he saw Irving in "The Bells," and how he was impressed with the trancelike sleep of the guilty innkeeper. Scores, ay, hundreds, of times since then had his poor, lonely soul wandered hither and thither in search of his lost Miriam. Eagerly he had read everything which held out any hope of communication with the spirit world. Many a midnight hour had he sat in the quiet of his room, straining every fibre of his being that he might in some way realize her presence.

"Miriam! Miriam!" he would call in hoarse whispers, then wait, listening intently for her reply. But the clock only ticked on the mantelpiece, voices spoke loudly on the street, or the winter's wind fiercely rattled the window near where he sat in his loneliness and despair.

Through the day, in the rush and strife of business, he would put away the longings of his heart, doing it with such success that no one ever thought of him as anything but a man of iron, whose one thought was to conquer the world of finance. But when the day was over, and the excitement had died out, often would he walk by the lake-front, fairly revelling in the wild

winds as they swept from the distant shore, feeling a strange joy in the carnival of tempest and storm!

At other times, in the hush of the summer's evening, when the long, shadowy arms of the night would be reaching out from the sky, ready to take the tired city to their embrace and hush it into sleep, he has sat as one in a dream, looking for the face that was dearer to him than life.

Many good, true, kindly women, who pitied his loneliness, had smiled upon him, and would have shared it willingly, but with him Miriam was not dead, she was living; to think, therefore, of asking another to take her place would be impossible.

"You know this woman?" Kitty Fillmore inquired. As almost everything occult has its home in Boston, Kitty was naturally the first one to ask this question.

"Yes, I know her well. She is a bright, intelligent woman. There is nothing visionary or romantic about her. She is happily married, has a pleasant home, is in good circumstances, takes splendid care of her children, doesn't write poetry or love-stories, and, all in all, is one of the most sensible women of my acquaintance. Yet on this point she is simply immovable. She won't argue with you, nor go into any discussion; she merely smiles when doubts are suggested, and turns the conversation into another channel."

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“As a theory, there is much in its favor,” Paul Bedford remarked, gravely, “and, if true, it explains many things now very mysterious. Still, I find this life heavy enough without taking on any other.”

“This lady, of whom my niece has spoken, makes me think of a turtle, with her other life covering her as a clumsy shell. But she probably enjoys it, as most likely the turtle does. Which reminds me,” and Mr. Milltrum broke out with a story that ended as all good dinner-stories should end. Soon after Miss Milltrum gave that unseen, but effective signal, with which a hostess announces a return to the parlor.

III.

GERALD BOTHWELL

MR. MILLTRUM soon made up his mind concerning Gerald Bothwell. And Mr. Milltrum's mind when once made up usually remained so. Not that he was more obstinate or positive than the average man, but he had a way of holding to his opinions with a consistency which rarely declined.

He was, of course, very courteous to Mr. Bothwell. On being introduced, he shook hands with him cordially, inquired in genuine Western fashion as to his health, was glad to meet him, and several times during the evening made openings for him to share in the general conversation. But Mr. Bothwell disappointed him, and he found himself hoping that Judith had not placed any importance on his attentions.

After most of the guests had gone, Mr. Bothwell included, Mr. Milltrum said to Bert Vernon:

"Come to my den and have a smoke. You can come up later, Paul. Peggy has some plans for to-morrow she wants to talk over with you."

In a few minutes Bert was in Mr. Milltrum's den, a room specially set apart for his use, into which the Misses Milltrum had put everything that coziness and comfort could suggest. Bert dropped into a luxurious chair not far from a little table on which were certain liquid refreshments and a box of rare cigars. This was not Bert's first visit to Mr. Milltrum's den, for, despite the disparity in their age, they were comparatively intimate.

"What do you know of Mr. Bothwell?" Mr. Milltrum inquired, as he held a lighter to his cigar.

"Very little, almost nothing, in fact," Bert replied, looking at his cigar with a goodly measure of contentment.

"My niece tells me you asked her to send him a card for one of her jamborees." Mr. Milltrum had now seated himself on a chair not far from Bert Vernon's.

"Yes, but he put it to me in a way I couldn't well refuse. Afterwards I was sorry."

"Would you mind telling me where you first met him, and how you got acquainted. I am not asking out of mere curiosity."

"Well, Mr. Milltrum, I am ashamed to say it, more especially after what you said to me over a year ago, but since you ask me a plain, direct question — I met him at Cranburg's."

"That place on — ?"

Bert nodded.

“ Was he playing? ”

Bert nodded again.

“ Who introduced you? ”

“ Tom Shirland.”

“ Shirland usually knows what he is about. At least, I should think so. His father, Judge Shirland, is an old friend of mine.”

“ As Tom introduced Bothwell, I thought, of course, it was all right, and the fellow made himself so agreeable that when Clarence Fillmore was making up a party for the yacht races, I got Bothwell in, where he met your nieces.’

“ Does Shirland know anything of him? ”

“ That, Mr. Milltrum, is where the shoe pinches. One day I asked Tom where he met Bothwell, and he was quite huffy about it. Tom is airish at times, and carries the earth in his vest-pocket. So he suggested that I mind my own business, which, I think, included going to the devil, and all the rest of it. This made me furious, for I knew then he was keeping something back. I therefore let Tom have it straight, told him that we were being held responsible for Bothwell, and were virtually his social endorsers. After a time, but not until I forced him, he owned up to meeting Bothwell at Nathan Neumarck’s.”

“ Nathan Neumarck’s! ”

"Yes, for Cranburg's cleaned Tom out, and he was forced to give paper."

"Which Neumarck took for a generous consideration."

"But not unless Bothwell endorsed it."

"Shirland, therefore, is under obligations to Bothwell."

"Just as I am, Mr. Milltrum. Don't look so hurt or surprised, for I feel bad enough as it is! And I'm going to make a clean breast of it, something I've wanted to do ever since the infernal thing took place. One night I went to Cranburg's, and for an hour had a run of rare luck. Everything came my way. My pile was big enough to start a bank. A crowd gathered around, and everything shut down except our game. Naturally, I got excited as I made scoop after scoop, and it looked one time as if Cranburg would have to throw up the sponge. But after a while luck went against me. Then I got reckless, and went in for higher stakes. Bothwell wanted me to stop, but how could I stop then? It would have been a case of white feather. So I went on thinking my turn would come again. But it didn't. Down went my pile until I was where I started. Again Bothwell wanted me to stop, but my blood was up, and I kept the thing going for an hour longer."

"How much did you lose?"

"Don't ask me, Mr. Milltrum, I would rather not say."

"Well, how did you get straightened out?"

"I'm not straightened out, and won't be for some time."

"But things had to be arranged."

"Confound it all!" Bert said, impatiently, then flinging his half-burnt cigar into the fire, he started from his chair and began to walk about the room.

But Mr. Milltrum quietly said:

"Out with it, Bert, out with it."

"Nathan Neumarck did the arranging; he took my paper, damn him for an old rascal!"

"And did Mr. Bothwell endorse your notes?"

"Yes, Neumarck insisted on it; so when he asked me for a place on Fillmore's yacht, and then later for a card from Miss Milltrum, I couldn't well refuse."

"Have you any idea of what Mr. Bothwell's business is?"

"Something in shipping; at least, I think so, for, after leaving Neumarck's, whose place is away down-town, I went with him to Burling Slip, where he has an office."

"And you went in?"

"Oh, yes! but there wasn't much to see, except what I would call a lot of junk. It is the rummiest place I was ever in."

Mr. Milltrum made no reply, contenting himself with lighting another cigar, and affectionately stroking his chin, a favorite exercise when ruminating. Then he said:

"The first thing is to get your notes from Neumarck. You called him a damned old rascal, and that suits him exactly. Only say next time that he is also an infernal thief. You didn't see Neumarck himself, did you?"

"No, some kind of an old bookkeeper did the business, going with my notes to an inner office, then coming out with the money."

"Did you ever see Cranburg?"

"Now that you ask me, I never did."

"Well, Bert, Cranburg and Neumarck are only names, and represent the same person. I don't wonder you are surprised. It is a fact, nevertheless. Cranburg has his decoys, who get the young fools — I can't help it, Bert, for they are nothing else — to lose their money at gaming-tables; then Neumarck takes their notes for more money, which they proceed to empty into his gaping maw. Some day the dirty fox, who is behind this business, will be run to earth. Now, if you will allow me to handle your affairs with Mr. Neumarck, I won't say a word to Paul Bedford, for I know how much he thinks of you, otherwise, I must tell him what a Jack you have been."

Mr. Milltrum's voice had just the right tone —

sufficiently serious to be impressive, yet by no means lacking in hearty sympathy.

"All right, Mr. Milltrum, you will find, though, I am in a nasty mess. But if you can help me out, I will pay you back to the last cent, if it takes everything I have."

No more was said, as Paul Bedford came in at that moment, and the conversation took another turn.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bothwell was going to his apartment in rather an unenviable frame of mind. The evening had not brought to him all the enjoyment it promised. He had counted on making a favorable impression on the Milltrum household, and expected that the laurels of the evening would fall to him. Judith had spoken of Uncle Milltrum in such a way that he looked for an old-fashioned Hoosier, who would appear very farmerlike — boots of the ploughman order, trousers ending abruptly at the ankle, coat adapted to all weathers and conditions, and whose loud guffaw would fill the Milltrums' parlor to overflowing. Instead, he found a carefully dressed old gentleman, whose coat fitted as well as his own, and who looked as though evening clothes were anything but a novelty. One glance at Mr. Milltrum satisfied Mr. Bothwell that the choice collection of stories and the little bundle of patronage he had provided specially for him would not be necessary. Indeed, before the even-

ing was half through he had discovered that the shoe was on the other foot, and as the foot happened to be large, and the shoe small, Mr. Bothwell was decidedly uncomfortable.

Then there was Paul Bedford, of whom Judith had spoken in the most casual way. He therefore expected to meet an undersized, underpaid, humble young clerk, to whom an evening at the Milltrums' would mean a token of condescension, involving supreme gratitude. But to his chagrin, Bedford was on the most friendly footing with the Milltrums, more than once addressing Miss Milltrum by her Christian name, though in a low tone intended only for herself. Evidently, his relation with the household was one of peculiar confidence, judging by the way in which they all treated him.

But what angered him more than anything else was the glee with which Judith announced in the parlor after dinner the discovery of a relationship to Paul Bedford, and the manifest satisfaction she took in speaking of him as her cousin. This was serious. Cousins, when two or three degrees removed, are always dangerous. There is just enough relationship to permit of close social intercourse, without starting comment, and not enough to prevent the cousinship from deepening into something far more definite. That Bedford might easily prove a dangerous rival, Bothwell had to admit. He was undeni-

ably handsome, but there was something far more impressive than good looks, — an air of mental force, of moral fibre, that form of character which unites the daring of a man with the tenderness of a woman. Bothwell may have been deficient in moral force, destitute, possibly, of the finer attributes of real manhood, but he could recognize these gifts in others. Often the villain in the gallery, or the dress circle, applauds the hero on the stage; and sometimes the woman in the boxes, or parquet, who has sold herself for a mess of pottage, sheds sympathetic tears when the footlight heroine dies defending her virtue.

From every point of view, Bothwell felt that the evening was a failure. To a nature such as Judith's, he knew that Paul Bedford would appeal with singular force. He must, therefore, bring matters to a crisis, so he smiled, an unpleasant, dangerous smile. By this time his cab had reached the "Sembrada," a palatial apartment house, fronting on the west side of Central Park.

On going to his rooms, the door was opened by a man dark enough to be a Nubian, of stature so low as to suggest a dwarf, but with arms and shoulders like those of a giant. In his ears, sailor-fashion, were small gold rings, though there was nothing of the seaman in his apparel.

How long he had been in Mr. Bothwell's

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service, no one could tell; the people of the "Sembrada" only knew that he came when Mr. Bothwell first took up his residence there; attended to the unpacking and arranging of the furniture, and seemed to understand where everything was to be placed. This implied a familiarity with Mr. Bothwell's possessions, and so it was believed that his term of service had been of considerable duration. But here conjecture ended. And for the best of reasons; for Yoba, as Mr. Bothwell called him, had lost his tongue, not figuratively, but literally, the operation of glossotomy having been performed in a very primitive fashion by some pirates on the west coast of Africa. Being unable to read or write, his communicating qualities were quite limited. But he could hear with extraordinary acuteness. And his eyes were wonderfully quick and keen. As a confidential servant he was invaluable, for the most private conversation could be carried on with safety in his presence, and secrets of whatever nature be freely reposed in him. That he served Mr. Bothwell with rare devotion was very manifest, and that he entertained for him a singular affection was equally apparent.

"Any messages, letters, or telegrams, Yoba?" Mr. Bothwell inquired as he went in.

Yoba nodded.

"Any one called since I went out?"

Yoba shook his head.

“Mix me a drink, and bring it to my room?”

Again Yoba nodded, and immediately disappeared.

If Mr. Milltrum had followed Gerald Bothwell to his room, he surely would have repeated the question he put to Bert Vernon concerning Mr. Bothwell's business. And most certainly he would have recalled Bert's reply. For a stranger apartment was probably never seen. It was Turkish, Persian, Indian, with a dash of Chinese and African. There were great tusks from Africa, mandarin robes from China, exquisite silks from India, silver ornaments of every imaginable variety from Persia, and any quantity of rugs and hangings from Turkey. From the ceiling hung a lamp, which undoubtedly had diffused its mellow light in some heathen temple, while on the floor was stretched a lion's skin, with the head of the royal beast so adjusted that it seemed instinct with life. Chairs worthy of a palace were disposed so carelessly as to dull the sense of value, though not even a huge Bagdad cover could hide the wonderful carving of an Oriental lounge, which occupied the space between a window and the mantelpiece. There was no attempt at order, indeed, the rooms were too crowded to admit of any, and one missed the touch, mysterious and undefinable, which proclaims the presence and control of feminine taste. It was not in any sense the abode of a sybarite, for there were

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too many ugly and dangerous-looking weapons around, such as heavy revolvers, short swords, breech-loading rifles, but if the walls had caved in after the manner of a ship's sides, and there had been port-holes instead of windows, Mr. Bothwell's apartment, at least the rooms occupied by himself, would have recalled the cabin of an old-time East Indiaman, whose hold was unable to stow all of its cargo; or that of some pirate of the Spanish Main, with the captain's share of the plunder heaped within his own quarters.

No one ever entered Mr. Bothwell's rooms during his absence. On that point, Yoba had strict orders. The guests of the "Sembrada," in a few instances, had made overtures looking to an exchange of calls, but Yoba either failed to comprehend their wishes, or had been so instructed by Mr. Bothwell, that the leaving of a card was the most any one accomplished. As Mr. Bothwell's card was not sent in exchange, the attempt at social intercourse was not a brilliant success. At rare intervals, Mr. Bothwell entertained visitors, but always at night, his guests coming in after theatre hours, and leaving before morning. Who these guests were, and what their business was, only Mr. Bothwell and Yoba knew, and as the one wouldn't tell, and the other couldn't, the "Sembrada" people were left to their surmisings.

As time went on, it became evident that Mr. Bothwell had no desire for anything but the most casual acquaintance. He had his own table in the dining-room, never sharing it with any one. He glanced over the morning papers at breakfast, but no letters, all mail being, invariably, sent to his rooms, and seemingly gave no heed to the other guests present. He nodded occasionally to the men whom he met in the smoking-room, but beyond this chary exchange of civilities he never went. So now he came and went without any one troubling him, for the "Sembrada" people had abandoned all effort to include him in their circle.

Glancing hastily over the letters Yoba had brought in, Bothwell selected one, which must have been brought by a special messenger, as it had no stamp or postal mark on the envelope. Opening it eagerly, he read:

"V. P. off S. H. Something must be done to-night. Will wait for you."

To the average mind, an unsigned note, written in pencil on a piece of coarse paper, might not mean very much, but this was not the case with Mr. Bothwell.

"Yoba, get out my V. P. togs, and be quick, like a good fellow. Then get into your own. We are going out to-night."

Yoba nodded, smiled, hastened to a trunk hidden in another room, and in five minutes Mr.

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Bothwell had exchanged his unimpeachable evening clothes for those of the captain of a coaster, and Yoba from a well-dressed house servant was transformed to an able-bodied seaman. Hastening to the nearest "L" station, Mr. Bothwell and Yoba were soon on their way down-town, and ere long reached Burling Slip.

IV.

SAXBY VERSUS MILLTRUM

MR. MILLTRUM was in a philosophic mood, not an unusual thing with elderly gentlemen, who have dined comfortably, wine'd respectably, and whose after-dinner cigar is of the brand which tends to amiable reflection.

On this particular evening he had been dining at the Holland House with Paul Bedford, and after dinner, in Paul's sitting-room, had various things to say.

"It isn't any use, Paul. We may try to regulate our lives in every possible way, but the wise man will always allow a wide margin for contingencies. The engineer in charge of our train has a way of disregarding signals, running past stations, sometimes getting switched off the track, and all our pulling at the bell-rope or shouting from the car-window won't affect him in the least."

Mr. Milltrum leaned back contentedly in his chair, and looked pleasantly at Paul, whose face was more serious than usual.

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"Sometimes it seems as if the engineer had fallen asleep," Mr. Milltrum continued, "and the train was having things its own way."

"That is all very well when the track is clear, otherwise there is a chance of trouble," Paul said, looking suggestively at Mr. Milltrum, then flicking the ashes from his cigar.

"Saxby & Co. at it again?" Mr. Milltrum inquired.

"Yes." Paul's tone was that of annoyance.

"Anything new?"

"Yes; they have gone in with Bothwell, and are trying to block our G. S. & W."

"How in creation did Bothwell know of G. S. & W.?"

"That is a mystery. But he found out somehow."

"He couldn't have got a hint from Chicago?"

"No one in Chicago knew anything about it," Paul answered, moodily, for he had been seriously troubled concerning this matter.

"The business was only settled a few days ago," Mr. Milltrum said, reflectively. "We talked it over at my nieces' the other evening when you were there."

"Yes, but we were alone at the time. The Misses Milltrum, you may remember, went out after dinner, and Judith, having a headache, retired early."

"So Bothwell has given the cue to Saxby?"

"No doubt about it. The result, you can imagine."

For a few moments, Mr. Milltrum sat holding his cigar between his thumb and finger. He was not a philosopher now. The comfortably dined and respectably wineed gentleman who had come up-stairs an hour before had gone, and in his stead was the keen, daring financier, who felt that a mighty battle awaited him on the coming morrow, and for which every energy would be called into play. This G. S. & W. was a darling scheme of his. For years he had been planning a consolidation of certain railroads, which, if accomplished, would mean a system larger and more powerful than the country had yet seen.

Paul had been at work ever since coming to New York perfecting the details, and in a few days expected that everything would be ready. The utmost secrecy had been observed. Not a whisper had been heard on the street. No one, seemingly, suspected the possibility of such a movement. And now Bothwell had discovered it! But worse, far worse, he had formed a combination with Mr. Saxby.

"Now, Paul," Mr. Milltrum said, rising from his chair, and walking across the room with the vigor of a young man, his eyes flashing, and his face intense with excitement, "you know what G. S. & W. means to me. It must go through, no matter who is hurt. I give you a free hand, and

by this time you know what that means. Fight it in your own way, but fight it to a finish, if it takes every penny I have in the world."

"Of course it must go through," Paul replied, decidedly. "We are sponsors for it, and the credit of the house is involved. But I am not troubled on that account. I am sorry, though, for Mr. Saxby. Unless he is careful, he may get hurt, and so seriously as to cripple him. I never can forget, Mr. Milltrum, that he is Miriam's father. That he should persistently get in the way distresses me exceedingly."

"My dear Paul, if you desire to hate a man everlastingly, do him an injury. The man who hurts me, I can easily forgive, but when I hurt a man, I never forgive him."

Mr. Milltrum, now that G. S. & W. had been disposed of, resumed his rôle of philosopher.

"You mean that Mr. Saxby — ?"

"That is just what I mean. There is no use in mincing matters."

"But we have been kind to him."

"Which only makes him more bitter. My dear fellow, Saxby would gladly go bankrupt to-morrow, if, by doing so, he could pull us down with him. But let us talk about something else. I have no patience with Saxby, and if he has been foolish enough to get in the way of G. S. & W., he must take the consequences."

"How about Bothwell?" There was a gleam

of mischief in Paul Bedford's eyes as he asked this question, for Mr. Milltrum's first dislike of Bothwell had deepened into positive hatred.

"Speaking of Bothwell reminds me," said Mr. Milltrum, lighting another cigar, and assuming the attitude of one who had a good story to tell, "that, at the suggestion of Bert Vernon, I went a short time since to Cranburg's —"

"To Cranburg's!" Paul interrupted, incredulously.

"Yes, to Cranburg's. Why not?"

"I thought you had outgrown your youthful follies."

"In which you are much mistaken."

"I shall have to tell Peggy."

"Peggy was there at the same time."

"What!"

"Don't jump at me that way, Paul. Please remember how nervous and easily frightened I am." Mr. Milltrum's smile just then was a fine piece of work, and on the stage would have been worth a gold mine.

"And you say Peggy was at Cranburg's?"

Paul could not persuade himself that Mr. Milltrum was serious.

"I do, for I saw her, and what is more, she went there with my consent."

"Mr. Milltrum, if any other man told me that I would knock him down."

"Certainly; so would I, provided he didn't

happen to be stronger and bigger than I am. There are times, Paul, when I hesitate to go into the knocking down business."

"But what on earth induced Peggy to enter such a place?" Never did a man's face more perfectly express bewilderment than Paul Bedford's at that moment.

"Well, after Bert Vernon told me of his experience in Cranburg's, and of Bothwell going with him to Neumarck's, — Bert told you the whole story, which was plucky of him, — I made up my mind to investigate on my own account. But I was puzzled and didn't just know how to go about it. So I took Peggy into my confidence, hoping that her woman's wit might help me out. And it did, Paul. My stars, who but a woman, and such a woman as Peggy, would ever have thought of such a scheme! Don't hurry me, Paul. I won't be hurried. Count yourself lucky in being told the story and not have to work it out as I had. Well, I suggested to Peggy that it would be a good thing if Bert Vernon could bring some evening to Cranburg's a young 'innocent,' and turn him loose to see, you know, what Bothwell would do with him. She thought the idea a capital one, and wrote to Bert Vernon that same evening. Bert came to the house when I was out, but she arranged everything with him, and he promised to bring up a young friend of his, a dapper little Englishman, whom he had met

the last time he was in London. Peggy said she would drill him in his part, and give him a code of signals, which Bert Vernon would understand. Peggy, you know, had stage fever at one time, went in for the dramatics, took lessons down here on Union Square, and for a time cut up all sorts of capers. I really thought one while she would go on the stage, and I declare I wouldn't have blamed her, for she had the stuff to make a big success of it. All this is news to you, I can tell by your face, but it is true, nevertheless. It was arranged by Peggy that I was to meet the little Englishman at Cranburg's, for if I went with him, it might be suspected that he belonged to our party. When I went in Bert Vernon introduced me to as spruce a specimen of bandbox nobility as I ever saw. He had the Dundreary lisp, the Chamberlain eyeglass, and all the 'haw aw yaw' tomfooleries one could desire. Bothwell came along as I was speaking to Lord Poldrum, as Bert called the Englishman, and said he was surprised to see me, but laughed in that way he has, and suggested what he called a friendly little game.

"Bert proposed, instead, taking me to see some pictures, which were in another room, so we went off, leaving the little lord with Bothwell. We were gone nearly half an hour, and when we came back Lord Bandbox was playing one of the stiffest games I ever saw. He lost money

in handfuls, and when his cash was gone, gave paper, just as Peggy had arranged. I then saw Bothwell make a sign to the cashier, after which he whispered something to Bert Vernon. Bert nodded, so the game went on, the Englishman having a run of awful poor luck. Finally, Lord Bandbox stopped, and intimated to Bert that he would have to cable next day for money. Bothwell then smiled at Bert, Bert at the little lord, and it was arranged that Neumarck should tide over the Englishman's troubles.

"Now, Mr. Paul Bedford, you will probably think that I am half blind, three-quarters deaf, and four-fourths hopelessly stupid, but that little English lord was Peggy! Yes, Peggy! My soul, how she has laughed at me since! Why didn't I recognize her? Because her own mother, one of the smartest women I ever knew, wouldn't have recognized her. Yes, you laugh, and think it was a great joke on a doting old man, but just remember that Bothwell was fooled a hundred times more than I was! I'd give half of the profits of G. S. & W. to be able to stage that scene in Cranburg's. Paul, I tell you it was the funniest thing I ever saw. There was I, hobnobbing, as I imagined, with a real lord. And it was 'My lord, may I get you this,' and 'My lord, may I have the pleasure,' and think of it being Peggy all the while! You haven't been to the house since. No, of course not, as you

only returned to the city yesterday. Bert Vernon will probably give you his version with imitations and variations. Well, I have nothing to say. I know when the joke is on me. But think of Peggy being able to fool Bothwell! My lord! and my Peggy! Isn't it a good one, Paul?"

Mr. Milltrum laughed until it seemed as if he would go to pieces, but, though he choked and coughed and nearly strangled, he kept it up, and finally started Paul, so that he forgot his moodiness and anxiety, and laughed more heartily than he had done for years.

"No question about it now," Mr. Milltrum said, after a time, "Bothwell is in league with Cranburg; thanks to Peggy, we have discovered that."

"He is also in league with Mr. Saxby," Paul replied, "and perhaps Peggy may help us in that, also."

It was now comparatively late, and after a few more suggestions relative to G. S. & W. Mr. Milltrum left the Holland House for the home of his nieces on Madison Avenue.

Instead of going to his room, Paul sent a long telegram to Mr. Saxby at Pelham. It was a strangely worded telegram, unlike the simple, direct messages which he usually wrote. Mr. Saxby was in his library when the telegram arrived, and with him were Mr. Bothwell and Mr. Crewe.

Mr. Saxby opened the telegram carelessly, for he was listening intently to Mr. Bothwell, who was then saying:

"We can block it, Mr. Saxby. They can't get one-quarter of the stock. Of that I am positive. So there is an opportunity to force them to the wall."

Then Mr. Saxby read the telegram, and as he did so a perplexed look came over his face, something not common with him, for he usually knew what he intended doing one way or the other.

"Are you certain, Mr. Bothwell? This is a serious matter. A slip or a misstep is as bad as a fall. To throw down the glove in this instance means more than some may imagine."

Mr. Crewe was the speaker, and he meant well, but he was unfortunate in hinting at the gravity of a struggle with Milltrum Bros. For this only excited Mr. Saxby's anger, and when a man is angry his judgment is beclouded and his reason unsteady.

"What is your opinion of this?" he asked, handing to Bothwell Paul Bedford's telegram.

"Just what I have been saying all along," he said, exultingly, as he read the message. "You have them now at your mercy. And this will be a good time to settle old scores."

There was no perplexity on Mr. Bothwell's face, nor indecision of any sort. Already he was

gloating over the terrible fall of his hated rival, and the bankruptcy of the once powerful Milltrum Bros.

“And what is your opinion, Mr. Crewe?”

“Exactly the opposite of Mr. Bothwell’s. I know Paul Bedford. That telegram is no ‘squeal.’ I regard it as a friendly warning, and if my advice is asked, I am prepared to give it,” and Mr. Crewe handed the telegram back to Mr. Saxby.

Here again Mr. Crewe blundered, by suggesting that the house of Saxby & Co. should permit a warning under any circumstances. Was it not strong enough to fight its own battles? Had things come to such a pass that a rival house, in sheer pity, must send it a warning telegram, and thus save it from loss? The idea of such a thing was simply maddening to Mr. Saxby, so he took Paul Bedford’s telegram from the table, tore it into fragments, and resumed with Mr. Bothwell the conversation which had been interrupted.

“I am very much obliged, but I cannot possibly stay all night,” Mr. Crewe said, when politely asked by Mr. Saxby to remain. Under ordinary circumstances, Mr. Saxby would have so insisted that Mr. Crewe could not have declined without giving offence, but Mr. Crewe had offended Mr. Saxby; he had counselled accepting an olive-branch from Milltrum Bros., and so was allowed

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to leave the Saxby mansion with merely formal regrets. But Mr. Crewe did a singular thing when he went to New York, for, instead of going home, he drove straight to the Holland House, and though past midnight, he insisted on having his card sent up to Paul Bedford's room. And then he did a yet stranger thing, for he not only went to Paul's room, remaining there for nearly an hour, but, on coming down, he wrote at least a score of telegrams, taking them to a Western Union office near by, where they were sent off instantly. One of these messages was to his own home, saying that business would detain him in the city overnight, but it did not say he was staying at the Holland House as Paul Bedford's guest.

This, however, was the case.

V.

EAVESDROPPING

ON the evening to which Paul Bedford referred in his conversation with Mr. Milltrum, when he spoke of having talked over G. S. & W. matters at the house of the Misses Milltrum, Judith Carreau pleaded a severe headache as an excuse for retiring to her room soon after dinner. And, judging by appearances, Miss Carreau was justified in her request. Her face had a flushed, feverish look; her eyes drooped wearily as though affected by the light, and she had a tense, drawn expression, like one struggling with severe pain. Usually when Mr. Milltrum and Paul came to dinner she shared generously in the conversation, sometimes with a sparkle and vivacity that were irresistible. Adopting the language of the home, she addressed Mr. Milltrum as "Uncle Lewis," a title to which he responded with affectionate interest; and now that her kinship with Paul Bedford was established and understood, she rarely hesitated to speak of him as "Cousin Paul," a familiarity of which he gladly availed

himself. But on this particular evening Judith was very quiet, hardly speaking except in answer to some direct question, and then in the briefest possible way. Once or twice, when Paul looked anxiously at her, she turned aside so as to avoid his glance, and when Mr. Milltrum spoke to her, even more kindly than usual, her lips trembled, and tears came to her eyes.

"I don't know what has come over Judith for the last few days," Miss Milltrum said to Maud, as they went up-stairs to prepare for a reception at the Savoy. "She isn't at all like herself. Of course you have noticed it?"

"Yes, she is nervous, easily disturbed, will start and appear frightened without any apparent cause, but I'm not surprised, Peggy."

"What, then, is the trouble?"

By this time the ladies had reached Miss Milltrum's sitting-room, the door of which Maud shut as she went in.

"Too much B., Peggy, too much B."

"You don't mean that Paul Bedford and Mr. Bothwell are —"

"That is just what I mean. Before Paul came, when Mr. Bothwell had everything his own way, Judith seemed content to let matters take their course. But now she is undecided. From our standpoint, there is no comparison whatever between the two men. Paul is a splendid fellow, with more manhood in his little finger than Mr.

Bothwell has in his whole body ten times over. But love, they say, is blind. And it must be blind as a bat, and with no more sense than a gosling just out of its shell. Most of the marriages I see remind me of blind man's buff, only that two are blinded instead of one."

"But Paul hasn't shown any special attention to Judith, at least, not enough to justify her in —"

"Falling in love with him? I didn't say she had. But she has come to the point of measuring one against the other."

"Then she is not in love with Mr. Bothwell, for love, at least the love that we read of, and which I suppose is the genuine thing, doesn't enter into calculations, and check off balances after the fashion of a bank clerk."

"I didn't say, Peggy, that she was in love with Mr. Bothwell. I merely said she had reached the point of comparison, in which one B was contrasted with the other B. One thing, however, Mr. Bothwell has in some way acquired a strong influence over Judith, for which I am very sorry."

"Singular how such a man can obtain a footing in New York. No one seems to know anything about him. He reminds me at times of Monte-Cristo. Over at the 'Sembrada,' where his apartments are, not a soul has the slightest acquaintance with him. You know what

a bright, keen-witted woman Mrs. Ibstone is, sharp as a needle and deliciously assurant; one who rarely gives up without gaining her point. Well, though she lives at the 'Sembrada,' and, in her way, has made every possible effort to reach Mr. Bothwell, she hasn't been able to do it. He comes and goes most mysteriously, sometimes taking as many trunks as a woman going to Newport for the season, then again having only a hand-bag, like a man going off merely for the night. All that Bert Vernon knows is what he told uncle. There is something very strange about the whole business."

"Has it ever occurred to you that Judith may have met Mr. Bothwell before she came to New York?"

Maud looked keenly at her sister as she asked this question. Miss Milltrum paused a moment or two before replying, then she said:

"I have had that feeling at times, but it seemed so improbable that I dismissed it."

"Why is it improbable? Mr. Bothwell is in the shipping business, his trade, according to Bert Vernon, being largely with the South. Mr. Carreau was also in the shipping business, and from what Judith says, was mostly connected with the North. Why, then, might they not have met? I am certain, Peggy, that Judith and Mr. Bothwell are not such strangers as they pretend

to be. And the influence he has over her may result from their acquaintance in New Orleans."

"She has no suspicion of my visit to Cranburg's?"

"Not the slightest."

"I wish there was some way of letting her know that we suspect Mr. Bothwell of being in league with Cranburg."

"Unless we have more than suspicions, it is better to wait. We have really no business with her affairs. Uncle Lewis is only her nominal guardian. She is our guest, nothing more, and owes us neither duty nor obedience."

"That is true," Miss Milltrum said, rising from her chair, and going to her dressing-room, Maud doing the same. Soon after, they were in the carriage on their way to the "Savoy."

When they had gone, Mr. Milltrum suggested to Paul an adjournment to the library, the large table there affording space for some maps he was anxious to consult. So they went to the library, Paul drawing the heavy portière across the doorway, Mr. Milltrum, meanwhile, unrolling several maps, and spreading them out. Hardly had they begun on what promised to be a serious business before a door was softly opened on the floor above, then a woman crept stealthily down the stairs, finally reaching the hall just outside

the library door. It was Judith! And she was playing the part of eavesdropper, listening eagerly to every word, and once or twice making notes on a tablet, which she held in her hand! As the servants were all down-stairs, and it was known that the Misses Milltrum had gone out for the evening, Judith was not afraid of interruption or discovery, so she almost touched the heavy portières, and even went so far as to peer in between the curtain and the door-frame. Having no cause to suspect listeners, Mr. Milltrum and Paul spoke freely to each other, Mr. Milltrum, at times, raising his voice much higher than was necessary. But whenever he discussed G. S. & W. with Paul, he invariably waxed eloquent. And eloquence is something which will not be restrained in whispers. He therefore spoke with considerable vehemence, warming up to it as the various advantages of the big railroad combination presented themselves. Paul was less demonstrative than Mr. Milltrum, still there was a light in his eye and a flush on his face, which betrayed something of the excitement he felt. After a time the maps were rolled up and put away in their covers, and the conversation drifted into other channels. Then Judith crept up-stairs as noiselessly as she had come down, and, on reaching her room, went to her desk and wrote:

“DEAR GERALD: — Meet me to-morrow at the usual place. I have something to tell you.

“JUDITH.”

Having sealed and directed the envelope, she took the letter to the mail-bag in the hall, then, returning to her room, lay down on the lounge, where the Misses Milltrum found her on their return from the “Savoy.”

The next day she seemed much better, and in the early afternoon went for a short walk in the park. If any one had followed her, she would have been seen to walk rapidly along the Mall, pass under the bridge, and hasten towards the lake. Then Mr. Bothwell might have been seen walking from the lake, meeting her before she had reached the bottom of the stone steps. To follow them any farther would be useless, for their voices were so low that no one, however anxious, could catch a word they said. When their conversation ended, Judith returned to the Milltrums', accompanied by Mr. Bothwell, who afterwards hastened down-town to Mr. Saxby's office, where he remained for some time.

These mysterious circumstances may help to explain what had puzzled Paul Bedford, — how Mr. Bothwell heard of the proposed G. S. & W. deal.

Mr. Saxby, on the morning after his consultation with Mr. Bothwell, determined to throw his whole strength against G. S. & W., confident that before the Stock Exchange closed he would achieve the most brilliant victory of his life. To this end he was at his office unusually early, that he might arrange his forces, and prepare for the battle which was at hand. Unfortunately, he had not said anything to Mr. Crewe of his intentions, and as the safes were all set by time locks, he could not do much with the extra hour at his disposal. So he fumed and fretted and worked himself up into a high state of irritation, the very worst thing under the circumstances. If a man is going to fight a duel, his arm will be unsteady, his eye blurred, his aim wild, should he be so foolish as to sit up half the night writing farewell letters, and waste the other half in eager, feverish desire to meet the one who has challenged him. That was exactly Mr. Saxby's condition. So he kept looking at the clock in his private office, then at his watch, then at the door, wondering if Mr. Crewe intended to come at all. Finally he came, though not the suave, confident Mr. Crewe of yesterday, but an anxious, careworn man, who looked as though the night had been one of serious toil. Mr. Saxby misconstrued these signs, and, remembering that Mr. Crewe had declined his invitation to remain at Pelham, concluded that the night had been

spent in a way not uncommon with Wall Street men who have more money than sense.

"You are late, Mr. Crewe," he said, sharply.

Mr. Crewe looked at the clock, but made no reply.

"I have been here nearly an hour," Mr. Saxby said, even more sharply, "but it has not done me any good. On such a morning as this, sir, no one should wait for ordinary office hours. Have you forgotten, Mr. Crewe, the matters of which we were speaking last evening?"

"No, sir!" The tone was respectful, but nothing more. Mr. Crewe had occasional moments when the Declaration of Independence meant something more than a musty old parchment.

"My affairs are evidently of less importance than other matters," Mr. Saxby said, looking angrily at Mr. Crewe.

Just then the Declaration of Independence rustled in the soul of Mr. Crewe. And he felt it. So with a flash of fire from his eyes, and a flush of indignation on his cheeks, he said:

"Mr. Saxby, please accept my resignation, to take effect at your earliest convenience."

This was surely a bad beginning for the day's battle. Mr. Crewe was a host in himself, and if it were known that he had withdrawn from the firm of Saxby & Co., the results might be serious. Mr. Saxby knew this. But those whom

the gods would destroy they first make mad. Evidently, they wanted to destroy Mr. Saxby, for he was mad enough to do anything. Without, therefore, abating anything of his curt, sharp tone, increasing it rather, he said:

“Your resignation is accepted, sir, and to take effect now.”

Without another word, Mr. Crewe went out from Mr. Saxby's private office into the one he had occupied for several years. There he took from his pocket a number of telegrams, and put them on his desk, together with some papers marked private.

“I am going out for a few minutes,” he said to one of the clerks; “if I am not back in a quarter of an hour, give these telegrams and papers to Mr. Saxby, or if he asks for them, say they are on my desk.” Mr. Crewe then went out, no one suspecting anything of what had taken place.

He had not been gone five minutes before Mr. Saxby made inquiries regarding the telegrams and papers of which Mr. Crewe had spoken, and they were instantly brought to him. Then followed about as bad an hour as Mr. Saxby ever had. Usually, a superb master of himself, and able to meet losses without showing a sign, in this instance the defeat was so overwhelming that he would have been more than human had he not felt it bitterly. The first telegram that he read — they had all been opened by Mr. Crewe,

and were answers to messages he had sent the night before — was from a leading firm in Boston, one on whose support Mr. Saxby had confidently relied. It was simple, but decisive.

“We are pledged to Milltrum Bros., and favor the scheme.”

Another was from Philadelphia, and said practically the same thing. One, still more important, came from Baltimore, and so on down the list. Then he remembered Paul Bedford’s message, and the warning it conveyed. And he also remembered the instructions given to his brokers in the heat and excitement of the night before. Looking at the clock, he saw that the Stock Exchange would open in ten minutes, and unless his orders were countermanded, the firm of Saxby & Co. would be bankrupt before the day ended.

There was no time to lose. Every minute was priceless. Before this his brokers had started for the Exchange, eager to execute his commissions. But there was no Mr. Crewe, ready for the push and jostle of the Exchange floor. He must therefore go himself. It was of the utmost importance that not even one order be carried out. So he rushed out of the office, almost ran to Wall Street, and got to the Exchange just in time to save himself from utter ruin. Already there were whisperings of G. S. & W. And somehow it had become known that he opposed the scheme. This meant a fight between Mill-

trum Bros. and Saxby & Co. As to the outcome of that fight, Wall Street had no doubts. And many would have been glad. Mr. Saxby had few friends. Haughty, imperious, often remorseless, he had aroused deep hatred in many places. But to the surprise of almost every one, Mr. Saxby, who not once a year appeared in Wall Street, was seen on the Stock Exchange floor, and the reason was soon apparent. G. S. & W. carried everything before it. There was hardly even a ripple of opposition. Milltrum Bros. easily acquired all the stock they cared for. Lacking the support of the Saxby interests, the stock rapidly fell from its opening price, and before an hour had gone Mr. Milltrum knew that the dream of his life had become a reality.

But what a day that was for Mr. Saxby! The bitter, humiliating fact that he was not penniless only because of the kindness of Paul Bedford was worse than poison in his blood.

VI.

VINCENT PERRIN

MR. SAXBY'S defeat, though galling to the point of desperation, did not involve him financially. Thanks to Paul Bedford's generous treatment of Mr. Crewe, and his frankness in allowing him to learn how completely Milltrum Bros. controlled the situation, Mr. Saxby was saved from what would have been utter ruin. But Mr. Bothwell did not escape so easily. Confident that he had Milltrum Bros. at a serious disadvantage, and positive that through Judith he had secured a secret of priceless value, he bought largely of such stocks as were essential to the new scheme. Having private ways of reaching Mr. Neumarck, he prevailed upon that astute gentleman to take his notes for large amounts, then hastened to certain brokers, who promptly accepted his commissions. So satisfied was he as to the turn of affairs that he bought everything on narrow margins, nor did he trouble about a reserve in case the market might weaken

or decline. Impatient for the opening of the battle, one of such importance to him, and on which he had staked so much, he went to the Stock Exchange early, and, having secured a good place in the gallery, eagerly waited for business to begin.

Looking down, he saw Mr. Saxby on the floor talking earnestly with a knot of brokers in one corner of the room; he then rapidly walked over to another corner where he whispered excitedly to three or four men who seemed surprised at what he said. But Mr. Bothwell only smiled. He was confident that Mr. Saxby had come to carry out in person the plans arranged so carefully the night before. How slowly the hands of the big clock moved! Would the time never come for opening? Ah! now the officers are taking their places. In another minute the hand will touch the gong; but what a long time it seemed! Now! But what was this? Mr. Saxby had gone! His brokers were silent — only a little sputtering of opposition, harmless as the throwing of corn-balls at an alligator, or bombarding Gibraltar with bean-blowers!

Down went the stocks in which Mr. Bothwell had invested his all, and much more. With ears strained to unnatural acuteness, he heard call after call, each one lower than the other, and in less than ten minutes he knew that his margins were exhausted, and that his stocks must be surren-

dered. Pale as death he stood. He looked down upon the floor as one in a dream. It seemed impossible that such a thing could happen. Nothing, seemingly, was more certain. Mr. Saxby must have been false to him. If not, why this utter failure of all their plans? He would go to Mr. Saxby's office, and demand an explanation. He would demand more, he would compel the arch traitor to make good what had been lost through his treachery. And if he refused, then —

Hastily making his way from the Stock Exchange gallery, he went to Mr. Saxby's office, where he had been a frequent visitor of late. The clerks, therefore, felt no surprise as he walked into the inner office, without first inquiring if Mr. Saxby would see him.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he asked, excitedly, looking at Mr. Saxby, his eyes blazing with anger.

Mr. Saxby turned upon him a face even more furious than his own. It was at Mr. Bothwell's suggestion that he had formed the combination to oppose G. S. & W. scheme, having first learned from him what Milltrum Bros. intended. And now to have his opposition go down like cardboard forts before a battery of heavy guns, everything swept away at the first shot, was to Mr. Saxby simply maddening.

The whole thing seemed ridiculous. Never

before had he been so treated. Milltrum Bros. could well laugh at the part he had played. For all this he blamed Mr. Bothwell, and determined, at the first opportunity, to have revenge.

"You mean your attempt to entrap me? You have come, I suppose, with a plausible explanation. It is not necessary. I do not care to hear it. My time is too valuable to waste it in that fashion. You thought to trick me, but failed." Mr. Saxby's voice had an edge so keen that even its whisper cut as the point of a lancet.

"You are a damned old scoundrel," Mr. Bothwell said, hoarsely, coming over to Mr. Saxby, and shaking his fist at him; "how dare you say such things to me after what you have done this morning? You are a traitor, sir. You sold me out. You went back on your agreement. You stood by and saw me robbed. But I am not going to lose my money, not if I have to swing for it. So pay up. Out of this office I don't go until you make good all I have lost."

"So that is your game. But I'm not surprised. The man who is such an idiot as to follow your lead in anything may surely be expected to stop at nothing. We don't, however, pay blackmail in this office, Mr. Bothwell. Your friends, the Milltrum Bros., will surely compensate you for the service rendered. You have, doubtless, an agreement with them."

The stinging contempt with which Mr. Saxby

spoke would have infuriated any one, much less a man of the Bothwell type. Without a thought, therefore, as to consequences, he caught Mr. Saxby by the throat, and shook him with a passion utterly reckless. But Mr. Saxby, though twenty years older than Bothwell, had not lost anything of his vigor. For the moment he was at a disadvantage, but he broke away from Bothwell's grasp, and in turn caught him with arms of iron.

"You cowardly hound!" he muttered, "you sneaking, spying whelp! Your place is in State's prison, and I will send you there."

When a man is wrestling for his life, and his antagonist is more powerful than himself, he should not waste any breath in threats. Mr. Saxby, therefore, weakened himself by just so much. Better far if he had called to the clerks in the outer office. Pride and anger, however, prevented his doing so.

If Mr. Crewe had been in his office he would have heard the scuffle, but no one was now in that room. And in great office buildings there are so many noises — opening and shutting of doors, sliding of elevator gates, ringing of bells, clicking of typewriters, tickers from the Stock Exchange — that it takes more than ordinary commotion to arouse curiosity. So they fought like two tigers, every moment adding to the anger and bitterness of the struggle. But Mr. Saxby

could not long continue the unequal conflict. Though years bring experience, they do not bring strength. And there are times when strength is of more value than anything else. It certainly was so in this instance, for Bothwell gradually forced asunder the arms that were pinioning him, then, drawing back, struck Mr. Saxby a cruel blow in the face, which caused him to fall helpless on the floor. Glancing at him as he lay there with blood streaming from his mouth and nose, Bothwell saw that he must make speedy escape, for some of the clerks would soon be coming in with telegrams and messages. But why go out empty-handed? The private safe was open. It surely contained some money. That money Bothwell must have, for he was now almost penniless. He sprang to the safe, took out several packages of bills, stuffed them into his pockets, then, jamming his hat down on his head, and turning up his coat-collar so as to hide all signs of the recent struggle, he strode out of the office, walked rapidly down the stairs, and was soon lost in the crowds thronging the streets. In a few minutes he was at Burling Slip, from which place he sent a message to Yoba at the "Sembrada." It was not a telegram that Yoba received, but a little wooden box, containing three or four strips of cardboard, but of different colors and numbers. But this Yoba seemed to understand, for in a

few minutes he returned, and gave to the messenger a large hand-bag. With all possible speed, the messenger hastened back to Burling Slip, and, ere long, Mr. Bothwell came out, but so changed that the sharpest eyes could not have detected him. He was dressed as on the night he received a mysterious message at the "Semburada," when he had on the rough clothing of the master of a coasting vessel, and Yoba was apparelled in the guise of a seaman. Strolling leisurely along Front Street, he looked like a down East skipper on his way to visit some friends. Passing a mail-box, he dropped in a letter, then going to the nearest "L" station, went to Forty-Second Street, where he changed for the Grand Central Depot. It was now almost noon, but he had ample time to get the train leaving for Boston. Entering the smoking-car, he carelessly tossed his large hand-bag, on which the letters V. P. were marked plainly, in the corner at his feet, and lighting a strong, cheap-looking cigar, seemed to be a veritable sea-captain on his way to Portland, or Bath, after a rather tedious voyage from New Orleans. On arriving in Boston, he concluded to spend the night at the United States Hotel, where he registered as Vincent Perrin, and was given a room. He remained indoors all evening, and most of the next day, only going out to secure a state-room on the Portland boat. A nasty, disagree-

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able day it was, and, having nothing special to do, he went on board fully an hour before sailing time.

"A bad night," he said to the purser, as he stood at the little window where tickets were bought and stateroom keys given out.

"One of the worst this season. But I don't suppose you mind it much." The purser made this remark after a glance at the passenger whose name on the lists sent from the office was "Vincent Perrin."

"Not specially. But the sail along the east coast at this time of the year is always disagreeable."

"If I had my way, I wouldn't put out to-night," the purser said.

"Is it likely to be so bad as that?"

"It may let up a little before morning, but it is snowing heavily, and there is more wind than I care for. Still, we must obey orders."

"Sure," was the laconic reply, and the supposed sea-captain moved away.

Soon after orders came from the main office for the steamer to proceed as usual, and in due time the clerk came for the passenger lists and the cargo manifest, bringing in exchange the papers for the Portland agent. To Bothwell's annoyance, he found, when opening his bag, that his fur cap had been forgotten at the hotel. Looking at his watch, he saw that nearly half an

hour remained, and by hurrying he could get his cap before the boat sailed. He started at once, taking long strides, and walking rapidly, but when within a few rods of the hotel he slipped on the icy sidewalk and fell, striking his head against the curbstone. Some passers-by went to his assistance, but he was unconscious, and apparently seriously hurt. A policeman summoned an ambulance, and he was taken to the hospital, where he remained in a stupor for several hours. Meantime, the Portland boat was on its way, but it never reached Portland, going down sometime in the night, without leaving a single trace of its presence, or a survivor to tell the terrible story of disaster.

Soon after Bothwell left Mr. Saxby's office, one of the clerks went in, where, to his amazement, he saw Mr. Saxby lying on the floor in a pool of blood. Rushing into the passageway, he shouted, "Help! Quick! Murder!" and in an instant all of the other clerks hurried in. One, more cool than the others, raised Mr. Saxby from the floor, and then, assisted by the cashier, placed him on the lounge. Another telephoned to the nearest police-station, asking that a surgeon be sent at once, adding that murder had been attempted. Just then Mr. Crewe came in, his anger having died away, considerably ashamed also of his foolish haste, and, seeing

how matters were, he at once assumed charge of affairs, giving his orders as at other times. Soon the police were on hand, accompanied by a police surgeon, who speedily made an examination, reporting that Mr. Saxby was not dangerously hurt, but would require care and quiet for some time.

When Mr. Saxby became conscious, and able to give a coherent account of what had taken place, it was long past noon, so that Bothwell had some hours in which to make his escape. He seemed pleased at seeing Mr. Crewe, but was so shaken and confused as to have slight remembrance of their dispute of the morning. When he so far recovered that he could recall with tolerable distinctness Bothwell's demands, he asked Mr. Crewe to see if anything had been taken from the safe. As Mr. Crewe was aware that several packages of bills were always held in reserve by Mr. Saxby to meet any unexpected demand after bank hours, he went to the compartment where they were kept. But they were gone. Bothwell had made a clean sweep, taking away what many men would regard as a fortune.

"The miserable thief," Mr. Saxby muttered. "But it serves me right. However, he can't be far away. Surely the police won't let such a hound escape."

Later in the afternoon he got from Mr. Crewe the story of the night before, and when he heard

that Paul Bedford gave him the names of the firms to whom he had telegraphed, in each case allowing the use of a code which would ensure immediate reply, he realized that Paul had tried to save him in every possible way. At the doctor's urgent request, he concluded to remain all night in his office, so Mr. Crewe telephoned to Pelham, and before long Mrs. Saxby appeared, bringing with her Doctor Barrington.

Miriam's death had wrought a great change in Mrs. Saxby. She was no longer the proud, imperious woman of former days. She was gentle, tender, sympathetic, and her face was much more winsome than when Paul Bedford first went to Pelham. The room in which Miriam died was a sanctuary to her. It remained exactly as when occupied by Miriam. No guest, no matter how favored, was given that room. No servant, no matter how careful, was permitted to put foot in that chamber. With her own hands, she did whatever work that room required.

For hours she would sit in the chair where Miriam sat during the weeks when she was battling with death, and her eyes would travel wistfully to the little cemetery where she so peacefully slept. Mrs. Saxby could not forgive herself. Her memory of Miriam's sufferings was terribly vivid. Had there been any way of undoing the past or making atonement, she would have accepted it at whatever cost. Sometimes she

felt like a murderess, and that Miriam's blood stained her soul.

Having no outside interests to engage her mind, caring nothing now for fashionable life, indifferent to many things which formerly absorbed her, she was in danger of becoming hopelessly despondent, but, fortunately, her better nature asserted itself, and she rallied from a condition which caused Doctor Barrington the gravest anxiety. Then, as the daughter sometimes lives out the incompleted life of her mother, she resolved to live out the incompleted life of her daughter, and each day tried to do as Miriam would have done had she been here in the flesh. So, strange as it may appear, out of Miriam's death came Mrs. Saxby's life. The soul of the daughter gave birth to the soul of the mother. A new being, therefore, appeared in Pelham, and the woman who had lost her life while Miriam lived found her life when Miriam died.

Of course she determined to stay all night. In vain Doctor Barrington pleaded with her to return to Pelham, promising to do everything possible for Mr. Saxby, even suggesting that her presence in the office would only be a restraint. In vain Mr. Saxby told her that, with Doctor Barrington and Mr. Crewe to take care of him, there was not the slightest necessity for her remaining. But her bonnet was off, her furs laid aside; the maid who had accompanied her had

been sent out with an office-boy to a neighboring restaurant, the telephone in the other office had been called into service, and soon pillows, rugs, comforters began to make their appearance; and then later, the most appetizing things that a well-furnished restaurant could send. Soon the deft, dainty touch of the woman's hand had transformed the hard, barren office into a cozy room, and even Mr. Saxby smiled gratefully at the change.

"Some one at the telephone wishes to speak with you, ma'am," the office boy said, respectfully, as he looked at Mrs. Saxby, who was now sitting beside the couch resting, while the maid was arranging the table. She at once went to the wire.

It was Paul Bedford, who had just heard of Bothwell's murderous assault. Having telephoned immediately to Pelham, and learned that Mrs. Saxby had gone to New York, he now asked for information.

"Certainly, Paul. Come at once. I am going to stay all night. Mr. Saxby is resting comfortably, and will be very glad to see you."

Then Paul said something to which she listened smilingly, her face lighting up much as Miriam's was wont to do when specially pleased.

"All right. We will wait for you. It is good of you to come so promptly."

Then she went back to the inner office, and

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told the maid to arrange for another place, as Mr. Bedford would arrive in a few minutes.

And come he did, receiving a far more cordial welcome than Mr. Saxby had ever given him before. When he left, two hours later, Mrs. Saxby went with him along the passageway, where he lovingly kissed her, the first kiss his lips had given since Miriam's eyes had closed in dreamless sleep.

VII.

THE PURSUIT AND ESCAPE

OF course the assault on Mr. Saxby was discussed at the Milltrum dinner-table that evening, for it was in the afternoon paper, set forth with all the skill and sensational genius known to metropolitan journalism. The Milltrums were under no restraint in speaking of the matter, for Miss Carreau, soon after lunch, went to her room, saying she was not well, and begged to be excused from coming down to dinner. As no hint of the trouble had come to the house until after she had gone up-stairs, naturally she was not supposed to know anything of what had taken place. The Misses Milltrum, having been down-town all morning, were not aware that just before noon a special messenger brought a bulky letter to Miss Carreau, which she opened in the quiet of her own room. What that letter contained, or how far it related to Mr. Bothwell, Miss Carreau did not state.

“I always knew he was an infernal rascal. How Judith ever tolerated him is more than I

can tell. Good Lord! To think that such a scoundrel should have sat at this table and mingled with our guests! It is enough to make a saint swear."

Mr. Milltrum had been sputtering about Bothwell for some time, and now, as he sipped his coffee, he broke out afresh.

"I didn't know that Mr. Bothwell had any business dealings with Mr. Saxby," Miss Milltrum observed, thoughtfully.

"Neither had he until recently. In some way, goodness only knows how, Bothwell learned of my G. S. & W. scheme, and worked Mr. Saxby in with him. Only for Paul Bedford's wonderful management, the whole business might have been blocked."

"But, Uncle Lewis, I thought, from what you said, that no one knew anything of your plans outside of Paul and yourself." It was Maud who spoke, fixing her clear, sharp eyes on Mr. Milltrum.

"Until one night, when I discussed the matter with Paul in this room, the subject was not even mentioned to a soul in New York, and yet within twenty-four hours, as we learned afterward, Bothwell was talking it over with Mr. Saxby."

"I wonder what night that was," Miss Milltrum remarked, her face having a perplexed look.

"No need to wonder, Peggy. Paul came up

specially, as you and Maud were going out somewhere, to the Savoy I think, and we came in here, using this table for our maps."

Just why Maud's eyes sought those of Miss Milltrum, or Miss Milltrum's eyes sought those of Maud, when Mr. Milltrum recalled the evening referred to, is a matter which must be left to explain itself. Perhaps they remembered that Judith was at home on the evening in question, and that, when she returned from her afternoon walk the following day, Mr. Bothwell accompanied her to the door.

Later in the evening Paul Bedford came up, bringing the latest news from Mr. Saxby, stating that, in addition to Bothwell's murderous assault, he had stolen a large sum of money from the private safe, and that a general police alarm had been sent out.

Little time was lost in sending out this alarm. Messages from police headquarters flashed to the railroad stations in Brooklyn and Jersey City, and the detectives at the Grand Central. Telegrams also were sent to every large city, and any passenger who resembled Bothwell was carefully shadowed. A man was stationed not far from the Sembrada, and another near the office on Burling Slip. A rigorous search of Mr. Bothwell's apartments was made, and Yoba questioned in every possible way. Never did an officer have a more unsatisfactory task than the

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examination of Yoba, whose smiles, nods, and head-shakes only added one mystery to another.

The officer swore several times, causing Yoba much merriment. Then he suggested, in very definite language, that Yoba was a fool of surpassing magnitude. At this, Yoba's eyes twinkled with pleasure.

"What kind of a creature is he?" the officer asked, helplessly, turning to the Sembrada steward, who had accompanied him to Mr. Bothwell's apartment.

The steward only shrugged his shoulders.

"He's the queerest specimen I ever came across," the officer said, looking at Yoba from head to foot.

"Do you understand English?" he shouted, impatiently.

Yoba's face had the seraphic, intelligent expression of an Alaska totem.

"When was Mr. Bothwell here?"

The totem smiled.

"Is he coming back to-night?"

The totem smiled again.

"Was he here this morning?"

Another smile from the totem.

"Perhaps you can do something with him, Tom," the officer said, despairingly, turning to his associate.

But Tom did no better. In fact, he did not do as well. For, under his stern appeals, Yoba

only grinned, the situation evidently being to him one of rare enjoyment. But the officer was determined to find some way to reach Yoba, and at length thought of writing his questions. So he got a large tablet and pencil and wrote laboriously:

"When did Mr. Bothwell say he would return?"

Then he handed the tablet to Yoba, expecting him to write an answer, instead of which the dwarf took the tablet and pencil and placed them on a large card-receiver, as he was wont to do with messages intended for Mr. Bothwell.

"Don't waste any more time on that idiot; it only sets him grinning like an ape. Holy Moses, what a face he has!" the first officer said, a remark which must have pleased Yoba immensely, judging by the magnitude of his smile.

But when the officers attempted to search the apartment, they found Yoba even more difficult to manage. They showed their badges and threatened all manner of things, causing Yoba's mouth to expand clear across his face; but over the threshold they were not allowed to pass, until the steward made a series of signs more or less intelligible. Then he let them in, but Bothwell was not there.

At Burling Slip there was not the same difficulty, the man in charge of the office opening at

once to the police, and readily answering their questions.

"No, he had not been there that day."

"He was not connected with the business."

"This was a tug and towage company."

"It was Mr. Bothwell's father who established the company, which accounted for the name."

"Mr. Bothwell gets mail here sometimes."

"I said he wasn't here to-day."

"He hasn't been here for a week."

"Certainly, come right in. We occupy this floor."

The detectives went in, but had only their trouble for their pains.

But there are some men on the New York police force who are not easily baffled, and who will follow up the slightest clue with the instinct of a bloodhound. Hence Mr. Bothwell was traced to Boston, then to the hotel where he spent the night, the fur cap left there helping to complete the identification. It was a simple matter to follow him to the Portland boat, for the name under which he registered at the hotel was on the passenger list. And as though all the proofs were not sufficient, the steamboat company's clerk, who went down to the wharf on that ill-fated evening, distinctly remembered such a man as the detectives described, standing near the purser's office. That ended the investigation.

No need for further replies. Bothwell was most assuredly a passenger on the Portland boat that night, when the steamer foundered with all on board. These facts were duly set forth in the New York papers, and after a day or two the Bothwell-Saxby incident gave way to matters of more importance.

Judith Carreau followed the proceedings with extraordinary interest, reading every line in the newspapers referring to the case. Closely veiled she went one day to police headquarters, and asked to see the detectives who had followed up the clues to Boston. They were not in just then, but the officer in charge, observing that his visitor was of a class not often seen in such a place, promised to send one or both of the detectives to any address she would leave with him.

Next day a tall, soldierly-looking man, well dressed, and of easy bearing, presented himself at the house of the Misses Milltrum, and asked for Miss Carreau. This was the detective. At Miss Carreau's request he gave a detailed account of the proceedings connected with his search for Bothwell, beginning at Burling Slip, and ending on the unfortunate Portland steamer.

"Then you think there is no doubt as to this person being Mr. Bothwell?" she asked with ill-concealed anxiety.

"None whatever, madam. I followed him step by step, all the way, and if that steamer

hadn't gone down he would now be in the city jail."

Judith shuddered.

"We don't usually allow these things to leave headquarters, but I brought this along thinking you might like to see it," and as he spoke the detective produced the fur cap.

Again Judith shuddered, this time more violently than before, for she had seen Mr. Bothwell wear such a cap when he went out driving. She took it in her trembling hands, but in a moment gave it back to the detective.

"I am indeed very much obliged to you," she said, speaking in a low, sad tone. "I knew Mr. Bothwell intimately. He often came to my father's house when we lived in the South. This will explain why I wanted to hear what you could tell me. Kindly accept this for your trouble," handing the officer an envelope. Then she added, "If at any time I should require your services, perhaps you will favor me with your card."

"Visiting-cards are not much in my line, madam, but this may answer," as he wrote his name and address on a slip of paper, and handed it to Judith.

When he had gone Miss Carreau went to her room, and locking the door, opened her desk, from which she took out the letter Bothwell had sent her the day he was leaving New York.

Within the large outer envelope was another on which was written in pencil, "Not to be opened until you hear from me." In the corner the initials "G. B." were quite visible, though not so plain as the other writing.

"Poor Gerald!" she murmured, softly. "Oh, why was he so foolish! And to think that this is the end!" She was pale as death. Not a sign of blood was in her face, and only for her eyes she would have seemed as a woman of Grecian marble. But her eyes burned with unnatural fire. Rage, hate, fury, flashed from them as sparks from an anvil. "They have murdered him," she whispered, with an intensity that sent the words from her lips like quivering arrows from a steel bow.

Then she opened the envelope and found in it a package of large bills, a number of gold certificates, and a small key of curious pattern. Hidden cunningly within the bills was a scrap of paper. Eagerly she read:

"I am compelled to fly. But I hope to see you soon. Keep the enclosed for me. Yoba understands about the key. Show it to him, that is all."

She kept within her room all that afternoon, only coming down when dinner was announced, but this excited no remark, as since Mr. Bothwell's disappearance her moods had been strangely variable.

When Bothwell opened his eyes and looked about him he wondered greatly. He was in a small room, lying on a narrow bed, the room scantily furnished, the bed unlike any on which he had ever slept. Having a peculiar sensation in his head, he put up his hand to feel what was the matter, when he touched something that seemed to be a thick bandage. This startled him, but not so much as hearing a pleasant voice say:

"Well, sir, you have had a long sleep. I hope you feel rested," and turning to the bedside he saw a comely, healthy-looking young woman in the garb of a hospital nurse.

But he could not get the relation of events. Why was he here? Why was his head bandaged? This surely was not the Portland steamer.

Seeing the mystified look on his face, the nurse came over to the bed, and laying her hand on his forehead said:

"No fever to speak of. Nothing serious then, you will be all right in a day or two."

"But what has happened? I don't remember a thing since—" Then it all came to him, his rushing from the steamer to the hotel, his slipping on the icy sidewalk, his terrible fall, and the blankness from which he was now awaking. In another moment the horrors of the day before broke upon him, and quicker far than lightning scene after scene flashed across his memory.

Then it occurred to Bothwell that perhaps he had not escaped, after all, and this room was the hospital ward of some prison.

"Where am I?" he asked, anxiously.

"In the City Hospital," the nurse answered, pleasantly.

Then she told him the accident wards were so crowded that he had been put in a private room, and as the case was not serious, he would be out in a day or two.

Soon the doctor made his morning round, and smilingly said the patient needed his breakfast more than anything else. After breakfast Bothwell got up, and, though weak, sat in an easy chair, and being anxious to get some news asked if he might have the morning papers. There was no reference to his attack on Mr. Saxby, the Boston papers having other matters to exploit. When the afternoon papers were brought in he saw that grave fears were expressed for the Portland steamer. The steamer had not arrived in Portland, nor had she been seen anywhere along the coast. The steamboat company was sending out tugs, hoping to discover the missing steamer, which had probably met with some accident, and was now in need of assistance. He explained to the nurse his anxiety by saying that he had friends on the Portland boat, and begged of her to let him have the latest editions of the papers. Next morning his first inquiry was about the

steamer, and if anything had been heard of her? But the papers had nothing to report, only to hope that the boat would weather the storm, and run in somewhere along the coast.

The passenger list was printed in full, and Bothwell saw there the name of "Vincent Perrin." Towards evening, as he felt now comparatively well, he left the hospital, receiving intact the substantial wallet which was in an inside pocket when he fell. Going to the Touraine, a hotel overlooking the Common, he engaged a room, registering as "Henry Simlick." Next day he again eagerly searched the papers first for New York items, and then for news of the Portland steamer. But there was nothing of interest from New York, everything centering on the ill-fated boat, which was now given up as lost.

Calling a cab he drove to a clothing house on Washington Street, where he made various purchases, ordering everything to be sent to the Touraine; then he went to a house which dealt in trunks and leather goods, and later to the Boston and Albany depot, where he secured a sleeper on the train going at midnight. A new scheme was now in Bothwell's mind. As the Portland boat was lost, he was supposed to be drowned. Granting that the detectives might get on his trail, they could only follow him to the steamer wharf. No one had seen him leave the

boat. His name was on the passenger list. The cap which he feared might lead to his detection would now only more fully identify him as having sailed for Portland. He had ample supplies of money to take him where he pleased. Gerald Bothwell was dead. Dead in the person of Vincent Perrin, who had gone down with scores of others on the night the Portland steamer sailed from Boston.

VIII.

A VISIT TO THE SEMBRADA

SOON after her interview with the detectives, Judith went to the Sembrada, taking the key Bothwell had directed her to show to Yoba. For reasons best known to herself, Judith was most anxious to secure the box or cabinet to which this key was related. With it in her possession, certain matters would easily adjust themselves.

The Milltrum carriage was always at Judith's disposal, but this morning she preferred to walk, for the air was crisp, stimulating, with just enough sting in it to make rapid walking a pleasure. And then a woman like Judith Carreau — superb in figure, of glorious beauty, with every movement suggesting fulness of life, and arrayed in garments singularly appropriate and becoming — has no right to allow herself to be boxed up in a carriage where people cannot see and admire her. A beautiful woman owes something to those who are not so favored. Miss Carreau recognized this obligation, for she seldom used the carriage unless it were an open one, and

then only when the drive was a sort of semi-procession with spectators in abundance. But we are not to infer that Judith was vain, for vanity is a poor, silly thing, no more to be compared with pride than flat cider with sparkling champagne.

On reaching the Sembrada she was bitterly disappointed to learn that Yoba had gone, without leaving a trace by which he might be discovered. The clerk, a courteous, intelligent young man, also informed her that Mr. Bothwell's apartment was now occupied by a Mr. Neumarck, an old gentleman, who rarely left his room. Seeing a look of surprise on Miss Carreau's face, the clerk added that, when Mr. Neumarck came to the Sembrada, he not only produced the lease under which Mr. Bothwell held the apartment, transferring to him the unexpired term, but also a deed or bill of sale covering the furniture.

This caused Judith to wonder if the article to which Bothwell referred when sending her the key was included in the effects of which Mr. Neumarck had taken possession. She suggested to the clerk the possibility of an interview with Mr. Neumarck. He smiled pleasantly, but shook his head. Then she became very charming in her insistence, assuring the clerk that Mr. Neumarck would undoubtedly make an exception in her favor. What could the poor fellow do under the influence of those pleading eyes, and with that beautiful face looking eagerly into his?

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So he yielded, as the man has ever done since Eve offered the apple to her obedient spouse.

On going to Mr. Neumarck's apartment, Miss Carreau pencilled a word or two on her visiting-card, and much to the clerk's surprise, for he had accompanied her up-stairs, the servant brought back word that Mr. Neumarck would see her.

An old, wizened, singular-looking man, but with eyes bright and keen as those of a ferret, was sitting propped up in a wheeled chair and holding her card in his hand, when she followed the servant into the room.

"What is your business, madam? Have you come to tell me anything of Mr. Bothwell? Are you aware that I am an invalid and do not receive visitors?" were the questions that greeted Judith before she had even seated herself, and asked with an eagerness which was very manifest.

"I come rather to ask a favor," Judith said, gently, "one which I hope you will grant, as it is of much importance to me."

"I thought you were going to tell me something about Mr. Bothwell. You wrote his name on your card. Otherwise the servant would not have let you in. Why did you give his name with yours?"

Never did Judith meet a pair of eyes that searched her so unsparingly as those of Mr. Neumarck. She could feel them, as points of flame, burn their way to the depths of her

heart. Realizing, therefore, that subterfuge or evasion would be useless, she replied:

"I had a letter from Mr. Bothwell the day he left New York. In that letter he enclosed this key, and I have come to find the box or cabinet which was placed in Yoba's care subject to my order."

For a few moments Mr. Neumarck looked at Judith, perhaps more intently than before, then he said, significantly:

"You must have been very intimate with Mr. Bothwell when he found leisure to write you at that time."

"I was intimate with Mr. Bothwell, very intimate. In fact we were —"

Judith stopped abruptly, though the ring of defiance in her voice continued to the last word.

"You think he is dead?" Mr. Neumarck asked the question in a cold, merciless tone.

"How can I think otherwise? I have seen the detective who traced him to Boston. There is no question in my mind."

If Judith's eyes had been as sharp as they were brilliant, or if she could have seen as deeply into Mr. Neumarck's face as he was seeing into hers, she might have noticed a peculiar expression flit across his features.

"Nothing more can be done, I suppose?" Mr. Neumarck's tone was that of utter indifference.

"What more can be done?" Judith asked, almost fiercely. He was on that Portland steamer when it was lost with all on board."

"Have you any interest in Mr. Bothwell other than to secure the article for which you have brought the key?"

How searching Mr. Neumarck's eyes were as he asked this question!

Judith's face flushed angrily. What right had Mr. Neumarck to probe into matters which did not concern him? Why should he be so curious regarding her relations with Mr. Bothwell? A hot reply, therefore, leaped to her lips, for her Southern blood was aroused. But she remembered that Mr. Neumarck had possibly in his possession that for which she had come, and a foolish anger now would only result in her defeat. So she answered, but speaking in a low tone, and with considerable restraint:

"My interest in Mr. Bothwell relates exclusively to the errand which brought me here this morning."

Again that singular expression flitted across Mr. Neumarck's face, but so quickly that Judith did not see it.

Then he touched a gong at his hand.

"Bring me that Cloissonné jewel-casket from the safe in my room," he said to the servant. In a few minutes the servant returned with a beautiful specimen of Cloissonné work, as large as an

ordinary cash-box, the lid fastened so cunningly that there seemed no place to insert the key Judith held in her fingers.

"It opens here," Mr. Neumarck said, sliding an outer covering from the face of the lock, "now please take it away."

He listened unmoved to her profuse thanks, studiously avoided the hand she extended in gratitude, nor did he make any reply to her parting words, save a nod of curt dismissal. But when she had gone he smiled mysteriously.

Walking rapidly across the park, holding firmly the precious box, Judith soon reached home, where she went at once to her room. Then with strange eagerness she opened the box, hardly giving a thought to some valuable jewels that were on the upper tray, intent only on finding some papers that were hidden in a compartment by itself. When she found these papers her face lit up with joy, and a little cry of gladness escaped her lips. Hardly daring to open them lest some prying eyes might see, she struck a match and held the papers to the flame, waiting till they were consumed to a crisp. And even of this she was careful, for she opened the window and so scattered the ashes that not a vestige remained. Then going back to the box, she took out the jewels one after the other, examining them carefully, trying some of the rings on her fingers, and enjoying the flash and sparkle of the stones.

When Judith came down to dinner that evening, instead of being anxious and preoccupied, she entered heartily into the conversation at the table, and told some bright Southern stories, rendering the negro dialect with such fidelity that Mr. Milltrum fairly shook with laughter. Miss Milltrum, no unworthy mimic herself, indeed a born actress, recognized in Judith a quality hitherto unnoticed, and mentally projected for the coming season certain entertainments, when this new talent would be of material service. Maud was simply amazed at the transformation in Judith. She had considered her dull, without skill in conversation, by no means adapted to the light, graceful ways so essential to social success. While she admitted to Miss Milltrum that Judith was singularly beautiful, and could wear a gown with rare distinction, beyond this Peggy could not persuade her to go. And now this same Judith, whom she had almost despised, was playing mental archery with Mr. Milltrum, sending well-aimed arrows from her dainty lips, some of them feathered with exquisite skill, and others so sharply tipped as to strike deeply into the target. Even Paul Bedford, though by no means of slow wit or dragging speech, was not proof against her pleasantries, and more than once had to join in the laugh against himself. Judith was surely in a most fascinating mood. Nor was it that mesmeric, dominating influence which exer-

cises a form of spell, but rather a pervading presence, quickening and stimulating all who are within its reach.

"I wish Judith could come with us to-night," Mr. Milltrum said, impulsively. "It must be terribly dull and lonesome here without a soul in the house except the servants."

"Yes, why not?" Paul responded, looking admiringly at Judith, who sat immediately opposite.

"Perhaps Judith would not care to come," Miss Milltrum suggested doubtingly, for she remembered that mourning robes were not considered good form in the Metropolitan Opera House, the place to which they were going later in the evening.

"Where are you going?" she asked, smilingly.

"To see 'Faust,'" Maud answered.

"'Faust!' Oh, I wish —" then she stopped abruptly.

For a few minutes no one spoke. Judith may not have intended anything by her dramatic and effective pause, nevertheless it secured positive results, for soon after, when the Misses Milltrum went up-stairs to dress for the opera, Judith went with them, and when they returned ready for the carriage waiting at the door, she accompanied them, nor did either Mr. Milltrum or Paul Bedford manifest any surprise when they saw her form one of the company. Verily the

feminine mind has various ways of securing its own desires.

A brilliant scene that surely was, on which Judith turned her wondering eyes, as, sitting in Mr. Milltrum's box, she looked around the crowded opera-house. All New York was there—at least all that New York is supposed to represent. The magnificent opera-house, with its superb decorations, was a revelation in itself, but the brilliant costumes, flashing diamonds, women resplendent in glorious beauty, everywhere signs of boundless wealth, filled Judith with amazement.

The possibility of entering such a world as this, of sharing in its pleasures, living its joyous and ambitious life, being openly received as a member of its favored circle, able to take her place among these envied daughters of Gotham, and in time, perhaps, be recognized as a leader in the fashionable host, so aroused Judith that for the moment she forgot everything, save the one purpose which now dominated her heart. A little smile hovered around her lips as she realized that opera-glasses were levelled at her from all parts of the house, and she instinctively felt the questioning now going on in many of the boxes.

Under the excitement her eyes glowed as with fire, a faint but exquisite flush crept into her cheeks, her face became radiant with newly awakened hopes and ambitions, so that her beauty

was positively startling. As a usual thing the Milltrum box excited little attention. It was taken for granted that the Misses Milltrum would wear handsome gowns, appropriate jewels, and properly represent the set to which they belonged.

But on this night the Milltrum box awakened general interest, and scores of questions were asked, most of them failing to secure definite reply.

In due time the curtain rose upon the grave year-worn Faust, whose life has been one of serious toil, almost unrelieved by such pleasures as usually come to men. A strange theme for the poet and dramatist — the struggle of a man with himself, the fierce contention of the two natures, in which the one battles with the other for the mastery. Judith seemed oblivious of her surroundings, leaning forward to catch every note of that wondrous music, as it rippled from Marguerite's throat, or fell from the lips of Faust, or leaped daringly from the mocking mouth of the Tempter. Again and again Paul Bedford looked at her, wondering why the opera affected her so strangely, for there were times when she shivered as though frightened by some mysterious foe, while in another moment he was certain that there were tears in her eyes. Being keenly susceptible to music himself, this responsiveness on the part of Judith quickened

his sympathies to a degree he had never before felt for her.

Assuredly Judith scored heavily that evening. Her vivacity during dinner, her exquisite tact in accepting the rather tardy and possible forced invitation of the Misses Milltrum to go with them to the opera, and her delicate appreciation of the music, combined to make the evening an unqualified success. No wonder, therefore, when she retired that night, there was a look of triumph on her face. And well there might be; for not only the evening, but the morning as well, had brought her within reaching distance of dreams long hidden in her soul.

IX.

A TRIP TO NEVADA

WHEN pity and gratitude lay siege to a man's heart, surrender is merely a question of time.

Ever since that night when Judith Carreau went with the Milltrums to the opera, a feeling of pity for the homeless, motherless stranger had taken possession of Paul Bedford. Neither did he fail to recall the peculiar circumstances under which Judith had come to the Milltrums, for Mr. Milltrum had shared with him the romance of his early life. Then, too, the fact that Judith was his own kinswoman, however distant, added to the burden of obligation, for blood is thicker than water, especially Southern blood. Probably if she had been less beautiful and attractive in person, Judith would not have appealed so strenuously to the chivalry and tenderness of Paul's heart, but that is a matter with which we have no concern. On general principles, however, it may be assumed that pity, when the object of it is a young and singularly beautiful woman, has

a way of enlarging itself into generous proportions.

Closely allied to this feeling of pity for Judith was his sense of gratitude to Mr. Milltrum. For Mr. Milltrum, Paul entertained a profound affection. He had been to him as a father, a guardian, a friend; he had rescued him from poverty, extended a cordial and generous hand, opened to him doorways that led to business success, and placed him under obligations which he never could repay. He also knew how Mr. Milltrum regarded Judith. The dear man made no secret of his affection for her, and, though at no time had he suggested such a thing, Paul could not but feel what he desired in his breast.

And so, between pity and gratitude, Paul found himself gradually yielding, and, while he well knew that Judith would never be to him what Miriam had been, might they not be measurably happy? Miriam's place in his heart was sacred, and would ever remain so. That was settled. For him there had been one real marriage, and there never could be another. But why doom himself to a lonely, homeless life, amassing wealth for which he had no special use, when Judith might share his fortune and make possible an existence less hopeless and barren?

Reasoning thus, — a sure proof that he was not in love, for love never reasons, — he became more cousinly in his attentions to Judith, finally

drifting into the position of an acknowledged suitor. It must be admitted that he was not an enthusiastic lover, and some women would have given him marching orders at short notice, but Judith seemed content to let matters take their course.

In this way the months went by, until one day there was a quiet wedding, so quiet, indeed, that few knew anything of it, save the little circle specially interested.

Having made large purchases in Nevada properties, Paul suggested that, instead of the orthodox wedding-jault, a private car be secured, and the Milltrums go with Judith and himself on a prospecting tour among the Nevada mines. This was readily agreed to, Mr. Milltrum entering into the plans with the greatest possible zest. There was a novelty about the arrangement which they all enjoyed, and, as the car was shunted off wherever the travellers pleased, remaining almost a week at Buffalo, giving time for Niagara and a little independent tour in Canada; then for another week at Chicago, where the Milltrum Bros., through their employees, gave the party a joyous reception; then again at other points on the way, more than a month elapsed before the company reached their destination.

It so happened that the special properties in which Paul Bedford was interested were situated in Storey County; the car, therefore, was run

to Virginia, which enjoyed the distinction of being the chief town of the county. Private cars were not an every-day occurrence in Virginia. Indeed, an ordinary train, such as one would find almost anywhere, meant an event of much importance to this county capital. Anything more impressive than a freight train, with a caboose into which a stray passenger might be stowed, usually excited general interest. So work was practically suspended for the time being, and all who could went down to the little station to see the train, of whose coming the station-master had received word several hours before. As it came in sight, there was a buzz of excitement, for few men in that company had ever seen such a train, a powerful locomotive, one of the best the road had at its disposal, and one solitary car, but longer and heavier than Virginia had yet known.

Virginia, at this time, was not densely populated, hardly numbering as many residents as a New York down-town block. Quite a little crowd gathered around the car when it finally came to a stop in the station. There were a number of women with children in their arms, and still more with youngsters tugging at their skirts, some of them much frightened at the puffing and snorting of the big engine. There were fully a score of boys, barefooted and bareheaded, and their general apparel was less evident than custom is

went to favor. Then there were girls, and young women, by no means unbecomingly attired; some of them fine specimens of healthy, vigorous life, and with that graceful movement which comes from untrammelled, unaffected youth. Of course, there were young men, and men not so young; men from the mines, and men from the country round about, for Virginia was something of a trading-centre, and furnished supplies to other sections of the county.

As the day was warm and it lacked some hours to sundown, the car windows were raised, thus affording the travellers an opportunity of enjoying the unwonted scene. But Mr. Milltrum was not content with looking out of the window. He had too much of the Western restlessness in his blood to sit quietly in his chair. So, at the first available moment, he went to the rear platform of the car, and, taking off his hat, said:

“Good afternoon, my friends. I am very glad to see you. I hope you are well. This is a fine country of yours. Lots of it, too. My name is Milltrum. I am going to stay a few days so as to get a breath of this good air and grow young and handsome again.”

The pleasant face of Mr. Milltrum, as he spoke, and his hearty, buoyant manner, instantly caught the sympathy of the Virginians, and they gave him a cheer of cordial welcome. By this time Paul had come to the platform, and could not

forbear a smile at Mr. Milltrum's characteristic introduction of himself.

"This gentleman," Mr. Milltrum continued, waving his hat in the direction of Paul, "is my partner, and, if I am not mistaken, has an interest in some of these mines. Well, you can trust him to do the fair, square thing every time and every day in the year."

At this, Paul took off his hat, and, smiling pleasantly, bowed an acknowledgment, which caused the Virginians to cheer him as they had Mr. Milltrum. -

The car was run on a siding, and the company, with the exception of Judith, started out to explore the town.

Leaning back in her chair, in a cool, white dress, sufficiently interested to enjoy the scene around her, Judith, to such Virginians as could see her, offered a picture rarely seen, either there or anywhere. And small wonder if many in that company envied this elegant, graceful, marvelously beautiful woman, reclining luxuriantly in her willow chair, her glorious eyes filled with the light that came streaming from the hills, and a smile of amusement playing on her tempting lips! Who would not envy one so happily placed? When a woman has youth, beauty, health, wealth, has she not the world at her feet, and what more can life give?

About an hour after the Milltrums, with Paul

Bedford, had gone to interview the storekeepers of Virginia, a man drove up to the station, and, when he had securely fastened his horse in the little shed, went across the track to the ticket-office.

Not having anything to do just then, and most of the Virginians being taken up with their own affairs, Judith followed the movements of the newcomer with considerable interest. That he was a man, full-grown, she saw at a glance, and yet he was so short in stature as to be practically a dwarf. Had he worn a short coat or jacket, at a distance he might have been mistaken for a boy, but, for some reason, he affected a garment of undue length, with results far from helpful to his personal appearance. As he came nearer, she saw that he was black, and of powerful frame, almost a giant, judging by his chest and shoulders. If Judith had not been from the far South, such a figure would have startled her; even as it was, she felt a measure of discomfort. She saw him go into the ticket-office, and, in a few moments, come out, followed by the station-master, whose face wore a heavy, puzzled expression. To her surprise, the station-master came down the track toward the car in which she was sitting, holding a letter in his hand, the dwarf following not far behind him.

"Where is Mr. Paul Bedford?" the station-master inquired of the car conductor, who was

standing on the track not far from the window where Judith sat.

"He went up-town about an hour ago," the conductor replied.

"When is he likely to be back? Here is a letter, rather important, I guess, but I can't make anything out of the chap who brought it. He is Simlick's man, and Simlick owns some mines not far from here."

The conductor, who had been with the party during all of the trip, a fine, capable fellow, looked inquiringly at the station-master, then at the strange creature who was spoken of as "Simlick's man."

"He's dumb, but not deaf; he understands well enough what's said to him, but he can't make you understand him. Sometimes he's an awfully aggravating fellow, and then again he manages first rate."

"Leave the letter here with me, and I will give it to Mr. Bedford as soon as he comes back," the conductor said, reaching out his hand to the station-master, but, before the letter could pass from one to the other, the dwarf interposed, and, by very definite signs, expressed positive disapproval.

"Has the critter a name?" the conductor asked, now considerably amused.

"Mr. Simlick calls him Yoba, and so we all call him hereabouts. Isn't he the queerest chap

you ever saw? I guess he will have to wait for Mr. Bedford."

Yoba! Here in Nevada! Every drop of blood left Judith's face as she heard the familiar name. True, she had never seen the dwarf, but Bothwell had often spoken of him, and she remembered that, in his last letter, he mentioned Yoba as having charge of the jewel-box. By what strange chance had he come to Nevada? And why did he disappear so strangely from New York? More than a year ago he had left the Sembrada, and, though she had employed the same detective whose search for Bothwell was so skilfully conducted, in the case of Yoba he could do nothing. And now to have him appear in this far-off place so startled her that for the time she seemed as one in a dream.

"How long have you known him?" she heard the conductor ask.

"About a year," the station-master replied. "He came with Mr. Simlick, who is nearly as close-mouthed as Yoba. But he's been wonderfully lucky."

"How so?"

"Most every way. Of course, he didn't come out here empty-handed, and, if a man has money to start with, the rest is easy. But Simlick seemed to know just where to put in his bar."

"Where did he come from?" How Judith listened for the station-master's reply!

"New England somewhere. His folks, I believe, were Austrians. At any rate, that was the record made in the county clerk's office when he was having the title-deeds made out."

In Austria! Judith now breathed with comparative freedom. Some color came back to her face. But, as the station-master went on, the color died away again.

"We have our own notions here about Mr. Simlick. Some of us think he is no more Austrian than I am. But that is neither here nor there. One sure thing, he is making money hand over fist, and, unless something happens, he will soon have shekles enough to build a house of solid silver from cellar to attic."

All this time Yoba stood between the station-master and the conductor, looking first at one, then at the other, listening eagerly to what was being said, apparently understanding every word.

Partly reassured, but anxious to learn all that was possible of Simlick, Judith leaned out of the window, and, addressing the car conductor, said:

"Mr. Bates, did I hear you say that some one had brought a letter for Mr. Bedford?"

"Yes, ma'am," he answered, coming to the window.

"Give it to me," Judith said, with a degree of imperiousness in her voice. This caused Yoba to look up to the window, and a strange expression came upon his face. There seemed in his eyes

a flash of recognition. This was instantly followed by a look of amazement. Immediately he was at the station-master's side, and, snatching the letter from his hand, hurried across the track.

"Don't follow him, Mr. Bates," Judith said, excitedly, for she was now almost certain that Yoba recognized her, and had declined, therefore, to permit Mr. Simlick's letter to pass into her possession.

There was no necessity of the conductor making any reply, for, before Yoba had reached the ticket-office, Paul Bedford, at the head of the Milltrum party, all laden down with parcels and bundles of every imaginable shape and size, came down the road from Virginia.

"There is Mr. Bedford now," the station-master said, and, without waiting to hear the muttered comment of the angry Bates, he followed Yoba, and, touching him on the shoulder, pointed to Paul Bedford. This Yoba seemed to understand, for he stopped and waited until the party had reached the car. Then he looked at the station-master, who merely nodded when they both recrossed the track, Yoba with the letter in his hand.

"A letter for you, Mr. Bedford," the station-master said, pointing to Yoba, who at once stepped up to Paul and handed him Mr. Simlick's communication.

Judith still sat at the open window, and, as

Paul took the letter, her face whitened as if in death, and she saw that when Yoba recognized Paul a gleam of hate shone from his eyes. What could it all mean? By what strange ordering of fate had her wedding-journey been so planned as to bring her into contact with Yoba, whose presence was a menace in itself? And who was the Mr. Simlick, to whom Yoba gave such service? Surely Bothwell — but, no, that could not be possible. Only an hour before every woman in the company gathered at the Virginia station envied the rich, beautiful young bride, as she rested her proud head against the cushions of her chair and looked carelessly at the throng.

Now there was a thorn with the rose, one all the more terrible because only the wearer of the rose knew of its existence.

X.

A CONFERENCE AT THE STATION

THE letter causing all this commotion was seemingly a simple, inoffensive note, and read as follows:

“MY DEAR SIR:—Our station-master informed me this morning that you were expected in Virginia sometime to-day. As there is a slight misunderstanding regarding the boundaries of our respective properties, I hasten to ask for a short interview this evening, as I believe we can adjust matters in a few minutes. I will arrange with the station-master for the use of his office, where we can have a table large enough for our maps, and make such comparisons as may be necessary. We have no trains in Virginia later than seven o'clock; any time after that will be convenient for the station-master. Kindly send word by bearer.

“Very truly yours,

“HENRY SIMLICK.

“*To Mr. Paul Bedford.*”

"Simlick! Simlick!" Paul said, trying to recall the name. "Oh, I remember now. He is the owner of some property adjoining ours. Haven't you heard of him, Mr. Milltrum?"

Mr. Milltrum was not thinking of Mr. Simlick just then. He was engaged in a critical but kindly study of Yoba, whose personal appearance had excited his curiosity. His long coat, his short legs, his immense shoulders and chest, his keen, quick eyes, glancing from one to another in the little group, suggested to Mr. Milltrum the mountain scene in "Rip Van Winkle," and he could scarce forbear a smile. Apparently Yoba was by no means displeased at the manifest interest of Mr. Milltrum, for he smiled when Mr. Milltrum smiled, he nodded when Mr. Milltrum nodded, and when, finally, the genial old gentleman, out of sheer pity for the unfortunate creature, extended his hand in silent sympathy, Yoba not only took it, but in an instant placed it on his head as a token of gratitude and submission. Mr. Milltrum little imagined all that his simple kindness involved. Just as a piece of cunningly hidden steel may affect the needle in a ship's compass, and send the vessel far out of the course originally intended, so was that handshake of Mr. Milltrum's. For Yoba had been so treated by cruel and unthinking people that he was now more of a savage than any of the tribe from which he had been stolen in his youth. Men had flung

jibes after him on the street. Boys had danced around him in mockery. Little girls had fled from him in terror. Women had openly shuddered in his presence. Everywhere he had been made a laughing-stock and butt for ridicule. Hatred had therefore so taken possession of him that he sought every possible opportunity of revenge, and he would chuckle and croak with fiendish pleasure at horrors from which other men would turn terror-stricken.

To have Mr. Milltrum look at him with pity; to hear him express to the station-master his sympathy with Yoba's sad condition; to feel something of what was meant in the grasp of that kindly hand! No wonder the poor fellow's face lit up with singular pleasure, for never before had he been favored with such a greeting, and, when he reverently placed Mr. Milltrum's hand upon his head, by that act he constituted himself both the slave and protector of the one who had so honored him.

After reading Mr. Simlick's letter, Paul Bedford went to the writing-desk in the car, where he wrote a courteous reply, accepting the appointment, and naming the hour when he would go to the station-master's office. This he gave to Yoba, who immediately started for the wagonshed, and in a few minutes drove rapidly away.

Yoba formed a general subject for conversation at the dinner-table, where the party assem-

bled soon after he had gone. Mr. Milltrum had made excellent use of the interval between Yoba's departure and the dinner-hour to learn all that was possible of the ill-favored dwarf and his mysterious master, questioning and cross-questioning the station-master after the manner of a criminal lawyer. At the dinner-table, Mr. Milltrum took a leading part in the conversation.

"Paul, I am glad we have gone into mining. We may be as fortunate as Mr. Simlick. Who knows? He has been here only a year, and yet has made, according to the station-master, three big fortunes. Peggy, I have made up my mind, if this Virginia venture succeeds, to have you married, no matter what it costs; you are in Maud's way, and it isn't fair. I know, of course, it will take a lot of money to do this, but I am desperate, Peggy, for your chances are shortening up. Meantime, these berries are not half-bad. Thank you, yes, I will, seeing you insist on it."

"Why not make some arrangements with Mr. Simlick? He is to meet Paul this evening. As the despairing uncle, appeal to him. Urge the claims of the lonely, yearning female. Take with you a typewritten list of my virtues and qualifications. Something may come of it, uncle. As a proof of my anxiety, I have given you the largest and nicest berries in the dish."

"Let Maud write that list, Peggy. A little

of her handwriting goes a long way. She can use up more paper and say less than most people. Her caligraphy is really imposing, and then it is so wonderfully indefinite. One can read out of it almost anything."

"Paul Bedford, I am ashamed of you! The idea of intimating that a list of Peggy's virtues would not cover a sheet of paper! To begin with, she is —"

"Yes, she is, Maud, she is, and has been for these many years. As her patient, long-suffering uncle, I have done all that was possible, and yet she is, yes, she is."

"Give me one more chance, uncle. See this Mr. Simlick. Use that moving, tearful eloquence of yours. Put the case to him so that it may appeal to his chivalry. Perhaps it may end with a 'Bless you, my children.'"

"Judith evidently has no such expectation. You observe how silent she is." As Mr. Milltrum spoke, he looked smilingly at Judith, hoping to arouse her interest in the conversation. Judith tried to smile, but it was a poor, pitiful effort, an expression of pain rather than pleasure.

"It might be well, uncle, before drawing up the settlements, to make inquiries as to Mr. Simlick's domestic arrangements. There may be a Mrs. Simlick somewhere. Such things are not uncommon. These mysterious men who drop down from the skies are not always angels. Most

of them have been on the earth before. Mrs. Simlick, however, supposing there is such a woman, may be willing to dispose of her interest at a reasonable price. Some women, provided the consideration is — Judith, what is the matter? Are you faint? Open the window, Paul. It is stifling hot here. That palm-leaf fan, Maud. There, she will be better in a few minutes.”

And Miss Milltrum was right, for soon a tinge of color came back to Judith’s face and she opened her eyes, though with a strangely frightened look.

“Don’t be alarmed,” she said, gently, “the heat has troubled me all day. Please excuse me if I go to my room for a little while. Thank you, Paul, but really there is no need of it. I am all right now.”

Nevertheless, she leaned heavily on Paul’s arm as she went to her room, and her face was almost as white as the pillow which Miss Milltrum placed under her head.

Though it was well known in Virginia that Mr. Simlick had been singularly fortunate, discovering silver where other men could find only dirt and sand, besides securing claims which promised to be of fabulous value, yet he lived in a rude hut, little better than that of the poorest miner. He was sitting on a bench outside his hut, waiting for Yoba to return from Virginia. The sun had gone down, but it was warm and

sultry, with sufficient heaviness in the air to suggest an approaching thunder-storm. From where he sat a splendid view was possible, for hills and mountains and sky stretched away into distances almost measureless.

Had he been sensitive to his surroundings, the wonderful stillness of that hour would surely have reproduced itself in his heart. He had thrown his hat on the ground, thus disclosing a head of splendid proportions, covered with a shock of coarse, black hair. Instead of coat and vest he wore a dark blue mining-shirt, which, unfastened at the neck, revealed a chest brawny as that of a Hercules. In his belt was the inevitable revolver, an ugly-looking weapon, and, when held by such a hand as his, it meant serious business. His trousers below the knees were stuffed, miner fashion, into his long, heavy boots. His eyes were keen and piercing as those of a hawk, and restless and eager as they were sharp and brilliant.

"Damn the fellow!" he muttered, rising from the bench and going to the end of the hut, where he could get a clearer look down the road.

"One comfort, anyhow, he doesn't waste his time chattering, otherwise — yes, he is coming. Think of me writing a letter to Paul Bedford! Henry Simlick, ha, ha! And actually proposing a friendly conference!"

If Paul Bedford had seen the expression on

Mr. Simlick's face at that moment, he would not have so readily accorded the desired interview, nor sent such a courteous reply to the letter Yoba had brought. For Simlick's face was cruel, vindictive, even murderous.

"How much do I owe Mr. Paul Bedford?" Simlick went on, for Yoba was yet half a mile distant. "One for interfering in the case of Bert Vernon," and he tapped the revolver significantly. "Another for attempting to entrap Judith with his claim of being a relation of hers. Another for ruining me in that G. S. and W. deal, when I lost every penny I could beg, borrow, or steal. Another for putting detectives on my track, who nearly nabbed me in Boston. Four in all. And Yoba will do the rest. I wonder what became of Judith? But, of course, she went South. Perhaps I —"

Mr. Simlick returned to his place on the bench, where Yoba found him a few minutes later, smoking a short briar pipe, apparently at peace with himself and every one else. As he read Paul Bedford's letter, a hard, bitter smile might have been seen on his face; then he went inside the hut to prepare for his appointment at the station-master's office.

It must be confessed that Paul Bedford awaited with some impatience the arrival of Mr. Simlick, for his curiosity had been aroused, not only by the letter received through Yoba, but by the in-

terest which Judith manifested in his coming. In the early evening Judith came out of her room, none the worse, seemingly, for her fainting-spell at the dinner-table. Indeed, she appeared better and more light-hearted than for several days, and, when Miss Milltrum playfully reminded Paul of the possibilities involved in his interview with Mr. Simlick, Judith insisted on his bringing back a full description of the mysterious miner.

"Has Maud made out that list?" Paul asked.

"I used up all the writing-paper in the desk, and then had merely started."

"There was only a half-sheet of note-paper to begin with," Mr. Milltrum said, slyly.

"Peggy must have taken it, then; there was a ream on the desk this morning," Paul remarked, rising from his chair.

"I did, for I wanted to prepare a list for 'the party of the second part.' That is the proper phrase, Uncle Lewis?"

"As correct, my dear, as though you had made a study of 'Coke upon Blackstone.'"

"As it isn't every day one can have a husband made to order, and as Uncle Lewis has promised to pay all charges, I have gone in for the real thing. He must be at least six feet, with light hair, blue eyes, beard and mustache à la Alfred the Great; not stout nor inclined to it, and with that benign expression seen in pictures of certain famous martyrs."

"That martyr-like expression would be sure to come later, Peggy."

"Uncle Lewis!"

"I mean the chastening influence the wife usually exerts on the husband. Have you never noticed the patient, pleading, please-excuse-me look, on the faces of men as they pass you on the street? I refer to married men, of course."

"And have you never noticed the pale, weary, worn-out, and ready-to-die look on the faces of the women who pass you on the street?"

"You refer to the man-hunters?"

"No, I don't, Uncle Lewis. I refer to the noble army of martyrs who have undertaken the fearful task of redeeming man from destruction, and crowning his years with gladness."

"There speaks my brave and valiant sister. Peggy, I am proud of you. The man who comes down upon you like a wolf on the fold will find —"

"No spring lamb; a rather unkind remark, Maud, however truthful."

"Will find a crabbed, cranky, crotchety old uncle, from whom the wolf will turn away with terror."

"In that case I will have saved the wolf from things he little imagined, Maud. Later, when he knows what I know, he will return with a heart bursting with gratitude."

"As Mr. Simlick is likely to do next week or next year?"

"Now Peggy, I have promised to help you all I can. But I dread the strain on my conscience."

"You have reason to. An article unused for so long is liable to give way."

"Give it up, Mr. Milltrum, and come with me," Paul said, laughingly. "We mustn't keep the wolf waiting."

When Paul, with Mr. Milltrum, entered the station-master's office, he found a burly-looking man rather above the average height, whose face was almost hidden by a thick black beard, and whose hair, uncropped and scraggy, bulged out under his slouched hat. A pair of smoked glasses, large enough to completely shadow his eyes, added to the strangeness of his appearance, and at the first glance he impressed Paul as a cross between an Armenian peddler and a Gay Head Indian. Though the evening was warm he wore a heavy reefer turned up at the collar, and riding-boots that reached above his knees.

"My name is Simlick," he said in a heavy guttural voice, turning to Paul. "May I ask which of you gentlemen is Mr. Paul Bedford?"

"I am," Paul answered, and would have extended his hand, but he saw that Mr. Simlick's hands were occupied, one with a riding-whip, and the other with a roll of papers. "This is Mr.

Milltrum," Paul continued, "the head of the firm with which I am connected."

Mr. Milltrum bowed courteously. Mr. Simlick merely nodded.

"I have some maps and deeds here," Mr. Simlick said, going to the table where the station-master had placed a lamp.

"Ours, I regret to say, are in New York," Paul replied, "but yours will doubtless serve for present purposes."

Mr. Milltrum, not caring to trouble himself with the tiresome details involved in a careful study of mining-maps, lit a cigar, and, taking the only comfortable chair in the place, smoked contentedly, knowing that Paul would attend to all that was necessary. Still he was considerably interested in Mr. Simlick. He wondered where he came from, why he had settled in Nevada, and how he could content himself with the rough life of a mining-camp. Though his voice was harsh, and his manners rude, the keen eyes of Mr. Milltrum detected signs of a former condition vastly different from this brawling, boorish settlement.

Quietly smoking, he looked at the two men bending over the table, and he contrasted the one with the other. Paul was clean shaven, his bright, intelligent face thrown into bold relief by the lamp near which he stood; the other hairy as an Esau, with almost nothing of his face visible, even his eyes hidden under the dark glasses; the one

speaking in low but decisive tones, his meaning clear and definite as language could impart; the other shaggy in speech as in appearance, and at times vague and shambling; the one laying a strong but shapely hand on the map, tracing lines more accurately than a drawing-master; the other making his corrections with a hand coarse and hardened as that of a street laborer. Yet there was something about Mr. Simlick which seemed familiar. What it was he could not tell. Assuredly not his voice, for it was foreign; and he could well believe the statement of the station-master about Simlick's parents being Austrians. His bearing, too, was not that of a New Yorker, nor of Chicago either; for Mr. Milltrum was too well acquainted with both of these cities not to recognize their marks. Still he could not shake off the impression of having seen Mr. Simlick before. But where? In vain he ransacked his memory, going over places and people, likely and unlikely, recalling as best he could almost every man of his acquaintance. The feeling, however, remained, and the more improbable it seemed, the more positive he became. Seeing that the interview was likely to continue longer than Mr. Simlick had suggested in his letter, Mr. Milltrum got up from his comfortable chair and said:

“Excuse me, gentlemen, I will finish my cigar out-of-doors. It is warm in this office.”

Without waiting for a reply he went out, meaning to walk up and down the deserted platform, and thus work off some of his perplexity. But to his surprise he saw Yoba sitting on the station truck, his eyes brighter even than in the daytime. It was now almost night, but the summer light had not all left the sky. Mr. Milltrum would have spoken, but Yoba signed to him in such a way that he instinctively waved his hand in reply. Then Yoba beckoned him away from the office window to the end of the platform, Mr. Milltrum following with no little curiosity. It must be confessed that Mr. Milltrum was startled when he saw Yoba take a revolver from his belt, and point it toward the window of the office where Mr. Simlick and Paul Bedford were holding their conference. But Yoba did not fire the revolver; he handed it instead to Mr. Milltrum, who took it somewhat gingerly, such things not being in his line. Yoba then led him back to the office window, and, after making signs which Mr. Milltrum interpreted as an appeal for silence, raised Mr. Milltrum's hand and so directed it that the revolver covered Paul Bedford. In another instant, before he had the faintest inkling of Yoba's meaning, the dwarf was leading him down the platform to the place they had just left. By this time a dim sense of Yoba's purpose was beginning to come upon Mr. Milltrum. Evidently a warning was intended. Some one had murderous designs

on Paul Bedford. Yoba's pantomime now began to explain itself. But why was he so fearful of Mr. Milltrum's voice reaching Mr. Simlick? Was it against Simlick that Yoba would fain warn Mr. Milltrum? For a few moments Mr. Milltrum did some rapid thinking. The cool, practised man of the Stock Exchange, accustomed to emergencies, sometimes having to decide the most serious matters in the twinkling of an eye, was rarely at a loss to know the right thing to do. He remembered that Yoba, though unable to speak, could hear and understand, so he instantly thought of a plan by which he could communicate with him.

Going over to Yoba and speaking in a low tone, he said:

"If you understand what I say give me your hand."

Immediately Yoba's hand was in his.

"When I ask you a question, and you want to say yes, open your hand. You understand?"

The hand was at once opened.

"And when I ask you another question and you want to say no, shut your hand, so."

Yoba's big black hand doubled up.

"Now, does any one mean to shoot Mr. Paul Bedford?"

Yoba quickly opened his hand.

"Some one intends to kill him?"

The hand remained open.

"Will it be safe for Mr. Bedford to go with Mr. Simlick to-morrow?"

The hand was clenched.

"Does Mr. Simlick know anything of the matter?"

Yoba folded his arms.

"You won't answer that question?"

Once more the hand was tightly shut.

"Is Mr. Simlick a good master to you?"

The hand opened widely.

"Would you be willing to leave his service?"

The hand was shut.

"If I go with Mr. Bedford to-morrow will it save him?"

The hand remained shut.

"Then we are not to go near the mines nor examine the property?"

The hand was now clenched.

"Did you come here specially to warn me?"

Immediately the hand opened, every finger stretched to its limit.

"Does Mr. Simlick know you are here?"

The hand shut again.

Mr. Milltrum had now discovered two things: that an attempt would be made on Paul Bedford's life if a suitable opportunity could be found, and that in some way Mr. Simlick was a party to this infamy. But in his anger at the treachery of Mr. Simlick, he did not forget the heroic service just rendered by Yoba. What motive prompted the

poor fellow to render this service he could not imagine. That he should tramp all these weary miles on a hot sultry night, to warn the unsuspecting travellers of Paul Bedford's danger, filled Mr. Milltrum with amazement. He knew that Yoba was not actuated by a sordid hope of reward. Something far deeper had stirred his soul. Little did Mr. Milltrum imagine that his own friendly greeting of the hapless Yoba, when a few hours before he had extended his hand in silent sympathy, had led to this result.

Taking a card from his pocket he gave it to Yoba, saying at the same time :

“If you ever need a friend come to me,” then extending his hand once more he bade him good-by.

Again Yoba placed Mr. Milltrum's hand on his head, then he reverently touched it with his lips, and in a moment had disappeared.

XI.

AN INTERRUPTED EXCURSION

PAUL BEDFORD found, as he carefully studied Mr. Simlick's maps, that several very important questions were involved, some of them more serious than he had been led to expect. Under ordinary circumstances a little strip of barren soil is not a matter of special consequence, and the boundary which marks off one property from another has no particular meaning. But when the line of division relates to silver mines, and may result in making one man rich at the expense of another, a proper adjustment is most desirable. In this case, Paul, while willing to concede that Mr. Simlick had certain claims and rights, insisted that the Milltrum properties had still larger claims and rights, and of much higher legal value.

"The only way to settle it, then, is for you to visit the property. If you wish, I will arrange with our surveyor. He can go over the ground with us. What say you?"

It was Mr. Simlick who made this proposition, rolling up the maps and papers as he spoke.

"I had other plans for to-morrow," Paul answered, lighting his cigar at the table lamp, "but perhaps it can be arranged."

Just then Mr. Milltrum came in, and Paul asked him if time could be given to a personal investigation of the matters under dispute.

"I wouldn't waste two minutes on it," Mr. Milltrum said, decisively. "What is the use? Our maps and deeds are in New York. There is nothing to guide us here except the papers Mr. Simlick has shown you to-night. If you can't reach an agreement now, where you have everything before your eyes, you certainly won't reach one to-morrow riding over a country which has neither fence nor wall, and where no visible boundary exists."

Mr. Milltrum spoke positively. There was even a ring of authority in his voice.

For this moment he was the senior partner. Generally he allowed Paul full swing. But occasionally he took the quarter-deck, and when he did Paul touched his cap respectfully.

"All right," Mr. Simlick said, ungraciously. "If there is trouble afterwards, don't blame me. One of these days I intend to sell out to a syndicate now being formed in New York. You may find settlement more difficult then." Mr. Simlick's smile was not alluring at that moment.

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Evidently he resented Mr. Milltrum's interference.

"I don't care for all the syndicates between here and Patagonia," Mr. Milltrum said, still on the quarter-deck, and with the trumpet at his mouth.

"Men have said that before and have been sorry enough for it afterwards," Mr. Simlick said, sneeringly.

"Very likely, only in this instance the syndicate will do whatever weeping has to be done."

Paul had never seen Mr. Milltrum so stirred up over, what seemed to him, a kindly proposal on the part of Mr. Simlick. Mr. Milltrum rarely allowed business matters to disturb him. Occasionally he would stamp and storm, but only at some treacherous, underhand scheme, which aroused all the anger of which he was capable.

"I don't think you quite understand Mr. Simlick's suggestion," Paul said, pleasantly.

"Yes, I do. I understand it thoroughly. A healthy suggestion it is, too. You, the representative of a firm which has lately made large purchases of mining property, are asked to go wandering through a country hardly more than half-savage, and where there is dispute concerning the property you claim. The thing is not to be thought of."

"We are not quite so lawless as you imagine," Mr. Simlick said, angrily.

"Perhaps not; but the temptation to refer the question of ownership to the chance shot of a revolver might prove too much for some men."

"You forget that Mr. Bedford would be under my protection," Mr. Simlick said, now blazing with anger.

"No, I don't," Mr. Milltrum almost shouted, thinking of Yoba's warning.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Just what I have said, sir."

The two men were now within reaching distance of each other, each looking defiantly into the other's face. For a moment it seemed as if Simlick would throw himself upon Mr. Milltrum, for he was at a point of fury bordering upon madness, but for some reason he hesitated, and then turning contemptuously, walked out of the little office. Paul was both amazed and mortified. Mr. Milltrum's anger seemed without excuse. To treat a friendly proposition in this high-handed way was positively insulting. Never before had he known Mr. Milltrum to be guilty of such discourtesy. He was therefore indignant, and silently chewed the end of his cigar, not daring to speak lest he give vent to something of his feeling. Neither did Mr. Milltrum say anything. Had he been a graven image he could not have stood more silent, until he heard the clatter of horse's hoofs coming up the road from the wagon-shed, and then die away in the distance.

"We are much obliged for the use of your office," he said to the station-master. "Kindly smoke with me," taking out of his pocket an envelope prepared for the occasion.

Going back to the car, Mr. Milltrum told Paul of Yoba's mysterious warning. Paul was astounded. That a disputed claim could lead to such results seemed incomprehensible. He had always known that mining communities were more or less indifferent to court decrees and legal settlements, but for a man to be lured to his death under the pretence of adjusting a dispute revealed a condition at which he stood aghast. They both agreed, however, not to say anything of the matter, but to make some excuse for leaving Virginia by the first train in the morning to which their car could be attached.

The hour spent by Paul and Mr. Milltrum in the station-master's office was one of intolerable agony to Judith. Most of the time she was in her room, where with haggard face, burning eyes, clenched hands, she looked the picture of wretchedness and despair. More than once she buried her head in the couch pillows, lest her sighs and gasps might be heard by Miss Milltrum or Maud. Then, under her breath, she would mutter:

"I will not! I will not! I don't care what the consequences are."

But, immediately following these suppressed

cries, she would shiver from head to foot, as though affected by a sudden chill. Again she would softly whisper:

“It cannot be. It is merely a wild, foolish notion. Why do I distress myself in this silly way?”

A more quiet expression would then come upon her face, and, going to the mirror, she would smile at herself and at the notions which had so distressed her. This feeling, though, soon passed away, and the tumult began anew.

“What if it should be? My God, just think of it! Oh, why did we ever come to this wretched place? And why did that miserable dwarf come with a letter for Paul? Perhaps if I had seen the letter I could then have told. But I did not dare to ask Paul for it lest — oh, I shall go mad unless they come back soon.”

Once more she would start from her chair, and, like a caged tigress, walk to and fro in the little room.

“Ah! I hear steps on the road. They are coming this way. Now they are almost at the car. I will wait here and listen.”

“Well, what about the wolf?” Maud asked, when Mr. Milltrum came in.

How Judith strained her ears, not only to hear his reply, but to catch the tone of his voice!

“The wolf has gone. I mentioned Peggy’s name to him, called his attention to the long list

of her virtues, offered him half of my kingdom as a wedding-portion, and made the most eloquent plea of my life, but he refused pointblank. I am afraid your last chance is gone, Peggy."

"Was he tall and fair, as I insisted on?"

"No, he was dumpy and black."

"Had he blue eyes and a King Alfred beard?"

"His eyes were goggled, and he had beard enough for a ship-load of pirates."

"Had he a rich, expressive voice, with a tender Romeo accent?"

"He had a voice like an animated beer barrel, and an accent of matted hair and cowhide boots."

"My romance, then, is over. But I am very grateful to you, Uncle Lewis. Of course I cannot but feel distressed at the way things have turned out. But I must submit."

"Where is Judith?" Paul asked, on coming in and not seeing her with the others.

"Here, sir," she answered, playfully, stepping out from her room with a light on her face which transfigured it, and a glow in her eyes that made them shine as stars in an Oriental sky. How different from the Judith of an hour ago! No care now to mar her glorious beauty. No marks of fear or terror distorting her features so that they were haggard and drawn. With easy grace she dropped into a chair, and listened eagerly to Paul's description of Mr. Simlick. Naturally

Paul exaggerated his portrayal of the mysterious miner, and, before he had half-finished his recital, Judith saw, as in a picture, a stout, squatty foreigner, coarse of face, clumsy of figure, with a scraggy beard; a blear-eyed, unkempt creature, without even the most distant resemblance to the one whose face had haunted her since Yoba's appearance earlier in the day.

"You have evidently recovered from the effects of the heat," Paul remarked, looking admiringly at Judith, "though this is by no means a North Pole atmosphere. Bates, my good fellow, can't we have a little more air?"

"Everything is open, sir," Bates answered, respectfully.

"Wrestling with the wolf, Paul, has overheated you. Peggy, I think, owes you some compensation. I heard her, a little while ago, lay her commands on the cook. She probably expected the wolf to return with you, and, in his honor, arranged for a banquet."

"Judith is speaking for herself, Paul. She was so distressed at dinner-time, when there seemed a probability of my leaving her, that she didn't eat a morsel. Hence this solicitude for your comfort."

"In this case, I must take sides with Judith. Peggy has, to my certain knowledge, been hobnobbing with the cook. And that she expected the wolf I am almost positive. When was Peggy

so arrayed? When did Peggy so anxiously consult the mirror in her dressing-room? Peggy, my dear, bring on your banquet. And give Judith the wolf's portion. Aunt Maria used to say, 'There is no cure for trouble like constant eating,' and, as I am in serious trouble, the best thing under the circumstances is to apply the remedy."

Peggy had a genius for little suppers, and almost every evening arranged a surprise of some sort. Soon, therefore, the company were enjoying themselves to their heart's content, and the clatter of dishes, the clink of glasses, ripples of laughter, and flashes of wit filled up what was left of the evening. Judith was simply irresistible. She mimicked, and she drawled; she twanged on the banjo, accompanying herself in some plantation melodies; she so reproduced the negro of her girlish days that they could see his rolling eyes, his opulent smile, and hear his self-appreciative chuckle. It may have been the wine, for Judith sipped, unthinkingly possibly, some iced champagne; but whatever the cause, she was in a daring, exultant mood, and fairly revelled in the excitement of the hour.

Before going to his room Mr. Milltrum spoke to the car conductor of the change in his plans, and requested him to connect with the first south-bound train, as the party intended going to Los Angeles, if possible.

Early next morning the car was coupled to a southern express, and when Judith looked out of her window, Virginia had disappeared in the distance.

BOOK III.
MIRIAM



I.

THE AMERICAN CHAPEL

ONE Sunday morning early in June, three years after his wedding-tour in Nevada, Paul Bedford came out of the Grand Hotel on the Boulevard de Capucines, and stood for some minutes watching the streams of people as they went by. Being comparatively familiar with Paris, Paul could shrewdly guess from the appearance of many in the throng as to their probable destination. Some were en route to the suburbs, Vincennes, St. Germain, Versailles, evidently bent on a day's picnic in the woods, a pleasure ever dear to young French hearts. Others, less ambitious in their desires, probably with less money in their pockets, hastened to the nearest street-car line connecting with the Bois de Boulogne. Nor was the pretty little Parc de Monceaux in danger of desertion, judging by the groups who turned off toward the Boulevard Haussman. A laughing, chatting, eager, vivacious company they surely were, many of them in the spring-time of life, and seemingly as free of care or shadow as

the sky which in deep unsullied blue arched over their heads.

Paul could not forbear an envious sigh when he saw a group of light-hearted students, easy, careless, debonair, swinging along in all the joy and daring of youth. More than once he found himself watching with almost pathetic interest those whom he suspected were lovers; the young man proudly conscious, and supremely happy in the new life with which his own was now blending; the young woman graceful, coquettish, a glad light shining on her face. Among the gaily dressed throngs he would see at times a woman clad in deep mourning, some mother going to the cemetery of Montmartre, or Père la Chaise, or a daughter with an offering of flowers for her mother's grave.

A few old people, whose garments betokened poverty, walked slowly in the throng, and as Paul watched them cross the wide boulevard he imagined they were going to the Church of the Madeleine, almost within bow-shot of where he was standing.

Having no definite plan for the morning, Paul sauntered easily along to the Rue Royale, where he paused a few minutes, looking at the Church of the Madeleine, whose splendid doors stood invitingly open, and from which could be heard the strains of the "Adeste Fideles" ascending to the God of all churches and of all nations. The

music of this noble hymn deeply affected Paul. He remembered that it was a special favorite with Miriam, and he could almost hear her sing: —

“Oh, come all ye people, joyful and triumphant!”

Walking slowly and with a heart crowded with tender memories, he reached the broad steps of the church, and would soon have taken his place among the worshippers, when he remembered that Doctor Keithburn had been announced to preach at the American Chapel on the Rue de Berri, and that he had partly promised to meet him there.

Looking at his watch, he found that it was comparatively early, so he lit a cigar and strolled along, his thoughts meanwhile going back to the time when he first met Doctor Keithburn. How vividly he recalled that eventful day in the Saxby parlor at Pelham, when with Miriam leaning heavily on his arm he heard Doctor Keithburn say, “I now pronounce you husband and wife,” and the rich, mellow tones of the clergyman thrilled mysteriously in Paul’s heart. And that look on Miriam’s face! Could he ever forget it? Or the love that shone from her eyes as they eagerly sought his? Or the sigh of delicious content with which she softly whispered, “I am yours now, Paul, yours, yours”? Or the terrible weeks that followed, when all that skill could suggest or wealth procure, or love make possible, were spent in vain?

Paul Bedford went back over those awful days,

when Miriam was torn from his arms, her bridal robe changed into a shroud, and her sweet face stilled into a sleep from which there is no waking. The birds were singing in the trees overhead, the children were playing in the grass at his feet, the flowers were filling the air with a fragrance sweeter than the breath of angels, the sun was shining with all the beauty of a Parisian summer morn, but he was unconscious of either flowers or songs; his thoughts were far away; his eyes were looking into those of Miriam; his ears were listening to her voice; in some mysterious way his spirit was communing with her spirit, and he felt, as never before, that she was touching him with unseen hands. Nine years she had been in the valley of silence, the dim, voiceless valley, into whose shadows he had so often looked with longing eyes, hoping that he might discern something of her gracious form or feel the touch of her loving hand. But no form had come to him; no voice had spoken to him; no hand had ministered to him. But now it would seem as though she had escaped from her prison-house of mystery, and was encompassing him about with the radiancy of her presence.

It lacked fully fifteen minutes of the appointed time for service when Paul reached the American Chapel on the Rue de Berri, but he went in and sat down, taking a seat on the side not far from the door.

Busy with his own thoughts, and in a mood which craved seclusion, he gave little heed to the groups that came in, though most of them were those of his own land. Nor did he take much interest in the opening service, preferring rather the emotions which had come to him while walking to the chapel. But he eagerly followed the movements of Doctor Keithburn, when he saw him enter the pulpit, and he listened intently to his discourse.

During the singing of the closing hymn, Paul glanced at the congregation, in which he recognized a number of familiar faces, when to his amazement, in a pew almost directly across the aisle, he saw Miriam! Miriam Saxby! Never was a man more startled. Only by a supreme effort could he refrain from calling her by name. His face became deadly pale. His eyes flamed with wonder. Then a faintness came upon him, and he would have fallen to the floor, had he not rested his hands on the back of the pew immediately in front of where he stood. Again and again he looked at the mysterious figure across the aisle, only to find the likeness even more startling. The same height, the same shapely head, the same dainty figure, and then, when she turned slightly, giving him a clearer view of her face, he saw Miriam's features reproduced with such exactness that he was utterly bewildered. As in a dream he heard Doctor Keithburn pro-

nounce the benediction, and felt a movement on the part of the congregation, but he had no thought or care for anything or any one, save the Miriam whom he had loved and lost nine years before. He resolved to wait and allow the congregation to pass out, so that when she should come down the aisle toward the light he might have opportunity of observing her closely.

How slowly the congregation moved! Would those chattering tourists and reunited parties ever leave the aisles? How senseless the inquiries they were making one of the other! Could they not defer their conversation, or hold it somewhere else? Every moment seemed an age to Paul Bedford. His soul was in a fever of impatience and desire. But at length the mysterious stranger came from her pew to the aisle, and his heart almost ceased beating. For there stood Miriam just as he had seen her when he first went to Pelham. There were the dark eyes full of hidden fire; the expressive face glowing with life and light; the lips curved with rare delicacy, and even the hair arranged as in the other days. As though these were not enough, the costume was as quaint and simple as of yore, so that nothing was lacking to make the resemblance complete.

"What does it all mean? Has Miriam really come back again? Can this be a reincarnation? May the dead after a time revisit the earth and resume the life they once lived in the flesh?"

These were among the questions which Paul asked himself as he watched what seemed to him a vision pass slowly down the aisle, and pause for a moment or two at the pew where he was standing. The pause, however, was not intended; but for a short space the aisle was crowded with a party of friends who had just discovered each other in the chapel. Nevertheless that was a serious pause; for Paul looked intently at the stranger who had so attracted him; and the stranger looked intently at Paul; the one because of the resemblance to the dead, the other because of some resemblance to the living. And then, incredible as it may seem, each flashed upon the other a look of recognition, perhaps less a look of definite recognition than of wonder and surprise.

Just at that moment Doctor Keithburn hurried down the aisle, for he had seen Paul Bedford in the congregation, and coming to his pew said in his hearty, cordial way:

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Bedford. Mr. and Mrs. Saxby are at the 'Continental,' and have strictly enjoined me not to return without you. Mrs. Saxby, you know, is not very well, and was unable to attend service this morning."

Doctor Keithburn then went on to speak of other things, and being wholly absorbed in his conversation with Paul Bedford, whom he had

not seen for some years, failed to observe a young lady then moving slowly toward the door. But Paul's eyes followed her with intense interest, for every motion suggested Miriam. And each instant made the resemblance more positive. Had Miriam not died in his arms, and had he not kissed her sweet, dead face, he would have been forced to believe that a horrible deception had been resorted to, of which he had been made the victim. No wonder, therefore, that he looked after her utterly bewildered and mystified. At the vestibule door she met some friends who detained her a few moments, which gave her an opportunity of looking back at the tall, handsome man, then speaking with Doctor Keithburn, whose presence seemed so familiar to her, and yet over whom her memory had struggled in vain.

Then she passed out from the chapel, her mind as confused and perplexed as that of Paul Bedford.

"I had a letter from Judith this morning," Miss Milltrum said to Paul, on his return from visiting Mr. and Mrs. Saxby, with whom he had spent the afternoon.

"Yes?" he answered, absently.

"She has taken the Llandoff Cottage and expects to spend the summer at Newport."

"Then she has changed her plans?"

"Evidently."

"Mrs. Helmsley, I presume, will go with her to Newport?"

"Yes, she says so in her letter."

"I think the arrangement a capital one. Judith likes Newport, and she is not partial to travelling. Of course —"

Paul might have said more, for he allowed himself to speak freely with Miss Milltrum, but just then Maud came in, followed a moment or two later by Mr. Milltrum.

After a time Judith's letter was again referred to, and caused various comments and reflections.

The only one of the party, however, who expressed either surprise or displeasure at the new turn of affairs was Mr. Milltrum. And he, as the conversation proceeded, warmed up to the point of plain, unvarnished anger.

"When people make plans in which the comfort and convenience of their friends are involved, they should at least try to carry them out. We know, of course, that Paul had to leave New York sooner than he intended. And we also know that our trip was a hurried affair, but under the circumstances what else could we do? It isn't every day that England floats a loan, and it isn't every firm that is cabled from Downing Street. But Judith promised to sail early in June, on the same steamer with the Hortons, who were coming direct to Paris. Now everything is turned topsy-

turvy. This means, I suppose, a new programme from top to bottom."

"Not at all," Paul answered, quietly. "I see no reason whatever for any change in our plans."

"You don't?" Mr. Milltrum said, excitedly.

"No; why should there be? Judith has secured very desirable accommodations at Newport. You remember the Llandoff Cottage, Peggy, which stands well up on the Bluffs and has a superb water view? With Mrs. Helmsley and her other friends there she is likely to have a most enjoyable season." There was not the faintest trace of anger or disappointment in Paul's voice. Nor was either manifest on his face. He discussed the matter as calmly as he would a business proposition in his office. If Judith elected to spend her summer in Newport, preferring that to a trip through Switzerland, surely she had the right of choice. And now that her decision was made, what need to treat it as an unsettled question?

But Mr. Milltrum was not so philosophic. Hence he argued at considerable length, and more than once felt like rating Paul for allowing Judith such unbounded liberty.

At this suggestion Paul merely smiled, and his smile was so frank, and so free from everything of bitterness, that Mr. Milltrum was forced to smile in return. This ended the discussion, at least so far as Paul was concerned, though it

must be admitted that the Milltrums talked it over among themselves.

"I would like to give Judith a good shaking," Maud said, a few hours later, when in the quiet of her sister's room.

"It wouldn't do any good," Miss Milltrum replied.

"It would do me good," Maud remarked, with a touch of spitefulness in her voice.

"In that case the proceeding would have my approval," Miss Milltrum responded, smilingly.

"But now, Peggy, in all seriousness, isn't this last whim of Judith's enough to provoke a saint?"

"I am not a saint, Maud, so I can't well answer your question."

"No, I never heard of a Saint Peggy, though I believe there was once a very pious Margaret, but that was before your time. But about Judith, I have a great notion to write and give her a piece of my mind."

"Don't. Your mind can't afford to give itself away so generously. Besides, Judith wouldn't thank you."

"You are just as indifferent as Paul. He doesn't seem to care what Judith does or where she goes."

"Now, my dear, we have talked this all over scores of times. And we know perfectly how matters stand. We both felt at the time that Paul's

marriage was a mistake. Of course, we couldn't tell him so then, and it would be cruel to tell him now. He married Judith simply because of a foolish sense of obligation to Uncle Lewis. That was wrong, very wrong, as I look at things. But Paul has such chivalrous notions, and feels so keenly all that Uncle Lewis has done for him, that to marry Judith seemed to him the right thing to do. He has never pretended to love Judith as a husband is supposed to love his wife. And, for that matter, she has made no pretence of loving him. If they are content, why should we trouble ourselves? The less we meddle in their affairs the better."

"But why doesn't she love him, and why doesn't she try to make him love her? If I had met a man like Paul Bedford twenty years ago, and he had chosen me for his wife, I would have idolized him, worshipped him, never willingly have allowed him out of my sight, and compelled him to love me in return."

"Yes, but Maud Milltrum and Judith Carreau are of entirely different blood. Judith has a queer strain in her. Remember how her mother treated Uncle Lewis. And then think of her father. I have always been sorry that Uncle Lewis became her guardian. It was more romantic than wise. And what could we do but give her a home, when Uncle Lewis so urgently requested it? Only for uncle's guardianship Judith might never have

met Paul, but I don't see how we can mend matters now."

Miss Milltrum sighed as she finished speaking, and there was a look of sadness on her face. She sincerely pitied Paul, and at heart disliked Judith.

Often she found herself wondering what the outcome would be.

"Of course we can't do anything, Peggy. And that is the hard part of it. But it is a shame that Paul's life should be spoiled in this way. True, he never says anything, and one might live under his roof for years without suspecting any trouble, but we know that he must feel Judith's utter indifference."

"Have you seen the Holbrooks?" Miss Milltrum asked, abruptly, anxious to change the conversation.

"No; when did they reach Paris? I thought they intended remaining in London."

"So they did, but Mrs. Holbrook was advised to try the Swiss air. They are going to Interlaken."

"Then we are likely to meet them there."

"Yes; they have engaged rooms at the Victoria, and expect to stay through July and August."

"Did you see Mrs. Holbrook? How is she looking? It is a wonder she didn't write to us, for I told her in my last letter we were going to Interlaken."

"I met Mrs. Holbrook at Saint Roch this morning. She is looking better than when we left New York. She intended writing you, but was not certain of her plans."

"Where are they staying?"

"At the Binda. I told her we would try and call to-morrow."

"You didn't see Miriam?"

"No; Mrs. Holbrook said she had gone to the American Chapel on the Rue de Berri."

"Where you should have gone, Peggy."

"Where you should have gone, Maud."

Then they smiled pleasantly at each other, after which Maud went to her room.

II.

THE HOLBROOKS

THE Milltrums did not reach Interlaken until late in July, for they travelled leisurely, and not after the fashion of the modern tourist. Paul Bedford, having been summoned to London, where he was detained several days, was not with the party when it arrived at the Victoria Hotel. Mrs. Holbrook, however, had been advised concerning the Milltrum plans, and gave the new arrivals a most cordial welcome. She had also made thoughtful provision for their comfort, an arrangement which they appreciated on going to their rooms. Where people are not stinted as to money, and are likely to remain several weeks, it is comparatively easy to secure both favors and privileges from hotel managers. Hence the Milltrums were domiciled in one of the most desirable suites in the Victoria, just across the hall and on the same floor with the Holbrooks.

In the days of their early girlhood, Marea Ellerton, as she was then called, and Marjorie Milltrum lived on the same street, not far from Wash-

ington Square, a fashionable region at that time. Though outwardly with little in common, the girls became strongly attached to each other, and their friendship deepened as they grew older. Marea was impressionable, sensitive, disposed somewhat to visions and day-dreams, and, under favorable conditions, might have developed into an artist or a poet. But a certain handsome young doctor appeared on the scene, when immediately Marea's dreams took another form, and her visions seemed to have a veritable incarnation. And so it came to pass that one bright spring morning Doctor Holbrook received his dainty and really beautiful bride at the hands of her father, and the Gothamites, who were bidden to the marriage-feast, declared the match a most suitable one in every way. Though far from being dependent on his profession, Doctor Holbrook entered into it with rare enthusiasm, and ere long established for himself an enviable reputation.

But a man, however vigorous, cannot attend patients all day and read laboriously half of the night. There are limits and boundaries beyond which no one can pass with impunity. But Doctor Holbrook would not be warned. He saw a most valuable discovery within reaching distance. To gain that prize he was prepared to sacrifice well-nigh everything. For this meant far more than either fame or fortune. Not that he lightly held either, but to relieve pain, to give men a fighting

chance for life, to remove from many homes the shadow of death, suggested infinitely more to Doctor Holbrook than the mere possession of wealth. One night the tired brain gave way. The weary body collapsed, and, when the morning came, Mrs. Holbrook was a widow. Miriam, then about fourteen years of age, though fully sensible of the irreparable loss which had befallen her, for her love for her father was almost an idolatry, realized that from henceforth she must be her mother's guardian and protector. Instead of the mother comforting the child, it was the child who comforted the mother. People said it was very strange, yet no one was surprised. For Miriam was unlike any other child they had ever known. Perhaps it was the result of her father's training, or, more likely, the bent of her own mind, but she had always been grave, dignified, mature, and with a wisdom far beyond her years. Soon, therefore, Mrs. Holbrook learned to depend on Miriam's judgment, and to trust her in matters rarely given to one so young. Favored by nature in many ways; inheriting all of her mother's beauty and much of her father's mentality; having an ample fortune as well, she seemed indifferent to matrimonial possibilities, and, when Paul Bedford first saw her in the American Chapel on the Rue de Berri, she was as heart-free as the innocent maiden of a poet's dream.

To Mr. Milltrum she took at once, finding him a delightful companion, and for the first week of his stay in Interlaken she chaperoned him everywhere. One day they would sail as far as Brienz, stopping long enough to explore the little town. The next day they went up to the other lake, landing at Thun, and making a brief visit; another day they took the stage to Grindelwald, where Mr. Milltrum insisted on seeing the ice grotto, and doing other foolish things, for in some respects he was as eager and as boyish as when in his teens.

Every morning, soon after breakfast, they would start off together, and many an envious glance was given Mr. Milltrum by the young men in the Victoria Hotel. And no wonder. For a more trim, dainty young lady was not then in Interlaken. Her touring costume was always a simple affair, usually of tweed, and very unobtrusive, just the garb adapted for the day, and for the wearer as well. Then she had the mysterious grace of a high-born American girl, a grace which is so distinctive as to be recognized anywhere.

Of course they talked about all sorts of things, for Mr. Milltrum soon discovered that Miriam had opinions and convictions somewhat out of the ordinary.

One morning a gray, unsettled sky interfered with a trip arranged the night before, so, rather

than go with the others, foraging through bric-à-brac and curio shops, Miss Holbrook and Mr. Milltrum climbed a hill some little distance from the hotel, where a splendid view of the Jungfrau could be obtained. For some time they watched the mountains and sky battle with each other; the sky attacking in fierce, whirling gusts, followed by battalions of mist and cloud rushing madly from the heavens; the mountains sullen and defiant, then after a time breaking through the enswathing host and lifting themselves proudly into the light. One moment the Jungfrau would be so covered with thick, fleecy folds that not a trace of it was visible; then the next moment its massive outline would be revealed with startling distinctness.

Turning from the mountain, where the mighty conflict was raging, Miss Holbrook said:

"I have a feeling, Mr. Milltrum, that I have been here before. So far as my immediate life is concerned, this is my first visit to Interlaken, yet I am not impressed with any special sense of strangeness. How is it with you?"

"Brand-new. Everything fresh from the mint. Never was here before, never expect to be here again."

There were times when as a matter-of-fact philosopher Mr. Milltrum held first place.

"But have you never met people, strangers, I mean, whom you were positive you had met

before? You could not place them, nor definitely recognize them, still you felt as if you had seen them somewhere. Perhaps I am not making myself clear."

"What you are saying is clear enough, but the idea you are working on is somewhat misty. Peggy, that is, my niece, Miss Milltrum, has a crony who insists that this is her second life in this world, but what her first life was she doesn't say. My education, I am afraid, has been sadly neglected, Miss Holbrook, despite the fact that both Peggy and Maud have so kindly taken me in hand."

"Well, let me give you an illustration of what I mean. A few Sundays since I was in the American Chapel in Paris, and there I saw a tall, handsome man, of perhaps thirty or thirty-five years of age. He sat on the same side not far from the door, and in going out I passed within touching distance of him. Now, I don't know his name. To my certain knowledge I never saw him before. And yet, when I looked at him, there was something in me which insisted on recognizing him, and, now don't laugh, I almost spoke to him when passing his pew."

"There is nothing remarkable in that. The stranger reminded you of some one whom you could not at that moment recall. You know nearly every person we meet reminds us of some other person, sometimes because of a resemblance

in feature, or more frequently through some trick of manner or bearing."

"On general principles, Mr. Milltrum, you are right, but in this case the general principles did not avail. The recognition was not outward. There was nothing familiar in the stranger's appearance. It was not a question of height, or size, or feature. I have no relative or friend who bears the slightest resemblance to the person of whom I am now speaking. And yet I am absolutely certain that I have met him somewhere, and not only met him, but have known him intimately."

For once the shrewd, hard-headed Westerner, whose life was usually so definite and practical, seemed at a loss what to say. He could tell by Miss Holbrook's serious air that she was not romancing or indulging in the dreams of a love-lorn maiden. She spoke of the meeting in the American Chapel so calmly, yet with such evident conviction, that he could not reply lightly, nor indulge in any pleasantry at her expense. There was that on her face which forbade his treating the affair as a jest. For she looked troubled. Her eyes, generally so bright, were clouded, and there was an anxious droop about her mouth, something very unusual with her. He did not, therefore, attempt any reply, but sat seemingly absorbed in the battle between mountain and sky.

After a few moments' silence, Miss Holbrook said, speaking even more seriously than before :

"The stranger recognized me. I could see it in his face, and, when I was detained by some people in the aisle, and had to stand at his pew until they moved on, we looked at each other in amazement. It was, indeed, Mr. Milltrum, a most singular experience. And ever since, when I have thought of it, which has been very often, I assure you, I have wondered what it all meant."

Again Mr. Milltrum turned his eyes to the mountains, and watched, with deepening interest, the struggle which every moment was becoming more fierce and absorbing. Finally he said, with a touch of lightness:

"Evidently the tall, handsome stranger made an impression on you. Tall, handsome men have advantages over others less favored."

Then he added, whimsically: "Now I might go to the American Chapel a score of times without arousing any special interest."

Miss Holbrook smiled, for Mr. Milltrum's humor was never biting or sarcastic.

"You would recognize the hero of your adventure?" he asked.

"Anywhere and instantly," she answered.

"We may run across him on some of our trips," he suggested.

"I earnestly hope so," she replied.

"The symptoms are serious," he said, gravely. Miss Holbrook laughed pleasantly.

By this time the clouds and mists had suffered

an overwhelming defeat, for the sun, with a myriad arrows of light, had come to the relief of the defiant mountains, that now lifted their heads gratefully into the shining sky, their ice-crowned summits blazing with diadems of jewels and gold.

When they returned to the hotel, Mr. Milltrum was given a telegram, which had come about an hour before.

“ Will reach Interlaken this evening, on train arriving at six. PAUL.”

Naturally, the Holbrooks were interested in the coming of Paul Bedford, for both Miss Milltrum and Maud had spoken of him so frequently as to arouse a degree of curiosity. Moreover, several trips had been postponed on his account, for the Misses Milltrum were good walkers, and had promised themselves two or three expeditions during his stay. Indeed, their ambitions had taken on such proportions that Mr. Milltrum vigorously protested, suggestively intimating that they had outgrown alpenstocks, and had reached the age when sedan-chairs were more suited to their needs. This rather nettled Miss Milltrum, consequently she resolved that when Paul came extensive tours would be made and the whole region explored in the most vigorous fashion.

When Paul entered the dining-room that eve-

ning with Miss Milltrum, the Holbrooks were already seated at their table in a little nook near a front window, and Mrs. Holbrook quietly remarked to her daughter:

"I presume that is Mr. Bedford, who is going with the Milltrum party to their table. You can see him in a moment, Miriam, without moving your head. He is, as far as looks go, all they have said."

Being a widow of recognized standing and with some fifty years to her credit, Mrs. Holbrook could look at the newcomer without embarrassment, whereas her daughter had to wait until the Milltrums crossed over to the table reserved for them. Then a startled look came upon Miriam's face. Her eyes filled with wonder. She watched the little group like one in a trance. She looked again and again, for she saw, not the Milltrums, but the stranger whose appearance had so affected her in the American Chapel, and of whom she had been speaking only that morning! Fortunately, the tables were some little distance apart, and in the seating Paul was placed with his back to the Holbrook corner; Miriam's agitation, therefore, was unnoticed, save by her mother, who looked at her anxiously and asked if anything was the matter.

"Perhaps I have been overdoing these last few days," Miss Holbrook managed to say. "The walk this morning was longer and more fatigu-

ing than I bargained for. Besides, it is hot here."

"Just what I was afraid of, Miriam. You must be more careful. I hope, now that Mr. Bedford is here, you will not fall in with any of Miss Milltrum's excursion notions. People can only do so much and no more. Are you better, dear?"

"It was just a moment's giddiness, mamma, and will be gone directly. Don't look so anxious, or every one in the dining-room will think something is wrong. I am really better, indeed I am."

Miriam smiled so bravely, and spoke so earnestly, that Mrs. Holbrook resumed her interrupted dinner without any misgivings.

Watching her opportunity, Miriam slipped out of the dining-room at the first convenient moment, making some excuse which Mrs. Holbrook readily accepted. On going to her room, she sat down in a chair near an open window, very much perplexed, and distressed as well. Keenly she remembered her conversation of the morning, and the frankness with which she had spoken to Mr. Milltrum. Most vividly she recalled her eager wish to meet the stranger she had described to him, and also her reference to the influence he had exerted, not only at their time of meeting, but ever since. And now to think that the stranger was none other than Mr. Bedford, whom she must meet within an hour, and in whose presence much of her life would be spent for the next few

weeks! She did not imagine for an instant that Mr. Milltrum would refer in the most remote way to their conversation, still the mere fact of her having spoken to him embarrassed her exceedingly.

As the Swiss twilights in July are very long, Miss Holbrook knew it would be useless to attempt any postponement of her meeting with Mr. Bedford until dark; besides, there were certain plans already formed for the evening by the Milltrums, in which she was included. So, nerving herself for the ordeal, she went down-stairs, and, at the end of the hotel veranda, she saw Miss Milltrum and Mr. Bedford talking earnestly. Something caused Paul to look in her direction, when, the moment he saw her, he started so violently that Miss Milltrum regarded him with surprise. In her white dinner-gown, with her cheeks almost deathly pale, her eyes like stars in a winter night, her dark hair forming an expressive background, she seemed to Paul the Miriam of other days, and, when she moved toward him, his face became almost ghastly, and his eyes started with amazement.

Not seeing her mother where she usually sat, Miss Holbrook went down the veranda steps leading to a little garden, much frequented in the evening by guests of the hotel. As she disappeared, Paul exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper:

“Peggy! For God’s sake tell me who that

young lady is! You saw her as she went by? Great heavens, what does it mean?"

In his excitement he took Miss Milltrum by both hands and led her to the veranda steps, where they could see Miss Holbrook speaking to her mother.

"That is Miss Holbrook; she is staying here with her mother. They are from New York."

Miss Milltrum's speech was almost as jerky and disconnected as Paul's, for he fairly took her breath away by his vehemence.

"Miss Holbrook!" he repeated, in a dazed way. "I thought she was — was some one else."

"Yes, Miss Holbrook, whose mother was my school crony before you were born. Miriam is —"

"Miriam! Is her name Miriam?"

The peculiar expression on Paul's face as he asked this question, and the intensity with which he waited for her reply, were very evident to Miss Milltrum.

"Yes, her name is Miriam, and she is a noble girl, whose devotion to her widowed mother is simply beautiful. Uncle Lewis thinks she is the sum of all perfections."

Later in the evening they were introduced, Miss Milltrum doing the honors, nevertheless it was an embarrassing moment to both Miss Holbrook and Paul.

Some notable event of Swiss history was to be

celebrated that evening at the Kursaal, ending with a firework display of unusual brilliance. Mr. Milltrum had secured seats for the party, and, at the proper time, they started off, accompanied by several other Americans who were staying at the Victoria. Mrs. Holbrook, being something of an invalid, asked to be excused, and went to her room, a cool wind beginning to blow from the mountains. This detained Miss Holbrook for some minutes, as she invariably assisted her mother in her preparations for the night.

"You wait for Miss Holbrook, Paul. She knows the way, and can pilot you. Tell her our seats are in the same section as those we had last week. Come along, Peggy. Maud, take my other arm. Don't be late, Paul, the music is worth hearing." With these instructions and commands, Mr. Milltrum departed.

On their way to the Kursaal, Paul said, quietly: "We have met before, Miss Holbrook. Do you remember where?"

"Yes; I saw you in the American Chapel about a month ago," Miss Holbrook answered.

"Was that our first time of meeting?" Paul asked, looking at her earnestly.

"The first of which I have any distinct recollections," Miss Holbrook replied, speaking almost in a whisper.

"Excuse me; it will doubtless seem a strange

thing for me to say, particularly as I remember that we were introduced not more than an hour ago, but somehow I feel that we are not meeting as strangers. When or how or under what circumstances we have met I cannot say, yet that we have met somewhere I am as positive as that we are now on our way to the Kursaal."

There was a certain quality in Paul's voice which could not be mistaken. He spoke with that accent of conviction which rarely fails to make itself impressive. But what made his words still more effective was the fact that they were almost an echo of what Miss Holbrook had said only that morning. She therefore looked at him in a nervous, startled way, almost ready to believe, though she instantly put it away as improbable, that Mr. Milltrum had violated her confidence. But, womanlike, she soon rallied, and, in a tone somewhat careless, she remarked:

"Resemblances and coincidences give to life much of its charm. And variety as well. We have, therefore, cause to be grateful for them. I am, at any rate."

Paul was disappointed at Miss Holbrook's reply. It was not what he expected. He was so serious that he was not prepared for any lightness or trifling. Ever since that day in Paris he had been troubled and anxious. He went to the American Chapel the following Sunday, but the one of all others he was so anxious to see failed

to appear. He made such inquiries as were possible through the American colony, but all in vain. And now, in the heart of Switzerland, in the most unexpected way, he discovers the object of his search. But of what avail? Only to learn that she is a Miss Holbrook, of New York, whose mother was a schoolmate of Miss Milltrum, and whose life in no way was related to his!

Chatting of other matters, they soon reached the Kursaal, and joined the Milltrum party.

III.

THE GEMMI PASS

MISS MILLTRUM'S programme was carried out to the letter. Despite the good-natured protests of Mr. Milltrum, excursions and tramping tours were the order of the day, only unpleasant weather causing any interruption. Sometimes the plans of the Misses Milltrum involved remaining overnight in some chalet or primitive hotel, for there are exquisite little nooks and corners in Switzerland where tourists must accept very simple fare, and accommodations anything but luxurious. But the Milltrum party gave small heed to these matters. Trifling inconveniences were of little moment compared with the enjoyment which they made possible. What odds if sometimes the floors were without either rug or carpet, or the dining-table guiltless of a cloth? What harm if the dinner did not suggest Sherry's on Fifth Avenue, or Chatham's on the Rue de la Paix? Did not the clear, crisp, marvellously healthful air more than atone for the lack of cer-

tain savory dishes, or the absence of familiar comforts?

So they all made much of their outings, laughing heartily at sundry mishaps and adventures. Miss Holbrook was always included in the party, her mother's health having so far improved as to admit of Miriam's absence without inconvenience. Indeed, Miss Holbrook was almost an essential, for there were times when Paul's French limped very badly, and his endeavors to express himself elicited only an unmeaning smile from the sad-faced waiter, or hotel landlord. At such times, and they were of frequent occurrence, Miss Holbrook would come to Paul's relief, when the waiter would bow gratefully, the landlord beam benignantly, and happiness once more diffuse itself upon the company. This led Paul and Miss Holbrook into frequent conversations, and, in time, he nearly always consulted her when making arrangements for the party. As a usual thing, Mr. Milltrum went with the "gadders," as he frequently termed them, and, while he grumbled occasionally in his quaint, humorous way, he enjoyed himself immensely. He was not a little vain of his appearance in a golfing suit, and more than once was taken for an English duke, his face and general bearing favoring the deception.

"Dukes have been known to be good, uncle, — at least, there is a tradition to that effect, — but a handsome one has yet to be born," Maud

said, when the landlord retired who had favored Mr. Milltrum with this patent of high nobility.

"Maud, I will disinherit you. I will leave my estates and ducal properties to the fortunate men who have been refused your hand in marriage. Am I not, Miss Holbrook, a handsome man?"

"Most assuredly, Mr. Milltrum. No seriously disposed person could question it."

"And Peggy, who has known me time out of mind, will bear testimony to my goodness."

"There are days, Uncle Lewis, when I have a conscience; this is one of them. So please excuse me."

"Peggy Milltrum! And after all that I have done to assist you on your man-hunting expeditions! O gratitude, where art thou?"

"It was the golfing-suit that did the business," Paul remarked. "That tumultuous tweed! That great organ open diapason pattern! Those Hebridean stockings of deep and manifold hue! The landlord was simply awed by such array."

"Envy, Paul, is the sure sign of a small nature. Therefore, I am not surprised by your comments."

Of course that was not the end of it, but Mr. Milltrum was always able to return a Roland for an Oliver. One day, though, he squared accounts with Paul, who, being unusually generous with the landlord of a little wayside hotel, was thanked most profusely and addressed as "Your Highness." Mr. Milltrum, who was standing

near by, could hardly restrain himself. And the look he gave Miss Holbrook, who had gone with Paul to act as interpreter, was distressingly comic. But, when he got away from the hotel, he gave a whoop that would have startled a New York newsboy.

"Peggy! Maud! Behold his Highness!" he shouted, as Paul came up the road. Then he explained, and the explanation lost nothing by his giving it, for he embellished with a genius worthy of a press agent.

"We surely are a distinguished party," Maud remarked. "I never expected that a simple American girl would be permitted to travel with a prince of the blood, and a duke of the realm. What are your Grace's commands for this afternoon? And has your Highness any special wish?"

So they chaffed and laughed, enjoying their holiday with all the zest imaginable, for, as Mr. Milltrum remarked, "The only way to get any fun out of life is to put some fun into it."

Thus the weeks went by, and the time was rapidly approaching when Paul Bedford would be compelled to leave for London, special matters requiring his presence there. But Miss Milltrum insisted that, before he left, the party must cross the Gemmi Pass, and get a glimpse of the Rhone valley. To this, Mr. Milltrum demurred. So did Mrs. Holbrook. Various reasons were given

and objections stated. Paul sat a silent but deeply interested listener, while the discussion went on. Once Miss Milltrum appealed to him, but he only smiled and shook his head.

"You can't do it in two days," Mr. Milltrum said, emphatically. "I have looked up the maps and guide-books. I don't know, Peggy, what put such a notion into your head."

"Why, uncle, it is a far easier trip than you imagine! We will sail to Thun, have carriages to Kandersteg, there procure horses to the Gemmi, where we can remain all night, and go down the pass in the morning before the sun gets too high. There is really no trouble about it."

"Isn't there? Some of these long-legged students, who are in training for seven days' walking-matches, might do what you propose, but for three women!"

When Mr. Milltrum said "three women," there was an inflection in his voice which immediately aroused both Maud and Miss Holbrook, and from that moment the opposition went down like corn before a reaping-machine. And so Miss Milltrum prevailed. Paul Bedford had misgivings concerning the proposed trip. Not that he dreaded any accident, or feared an inability to carry out the plan. But Paul was having trouble with himself, deeper and more serious trouble than he had ever thought possible. He had not attempted any renewal of his first conversation

with Miss Holbrook, and was exceedingly careful not to give her the slightest hint of his real feelings, but the idea that she was in some way associated with Miriam Saxby haunted him continually. In her rippling laugh, in some quaint turn of speech, in the shrug of her shoulders, in the tones of her voice, he could hear and see the Miriam to whom he had given the love of his young, eager heart. And every day the resemblance seemed to be more perfect. Often he would look at her when she was walking with Mr. Milltrum or talking with Maud, or revelling in the glories of some mountain view, and he could hardly persuade himself that he was not back again in Pelham, and that the last nine years of his life were only a dream. A touch of her hand sent the blood leaping wildly in his veins. A flash of her eye opened every doorway in his soul. In his heart she was not Miss Holbrook, but Miriam, the one who loved him better than life, and who had gone down into death with his name upon her lips.

He remembered Judith, but he also remembered that she came to him without words of wooing and tenderness, for she well knew that his heart was buried in the little cemetery at Pelham. Perhaps he was weak in yielding to the urgent wish of Mr. Milltrum, and sometimes he thought that he had failed in loyalty to the dead, but there had been no deception on his part. At no time had

he even pretended to love the imperious, beautiful Southerner, and she, it should be said, had been equally frank with him. Under these circumstances might he not allow some of the love which poured itself so lavishly into Miriam's grave to be given the new Miriam who seemed to have risen from that grave? For Miss Holbrook had not aroused any new passion or desire. It was simply the old love, the love that he had given Miriam, and which had never been withdrawn. He understood perfectly the nature of his obligations to Judith, and what the world demanded of him, but there were times when he thought all of the obligations should not rest on him, and that he had claims which ought not to be ignored. Paul was human, he was made of flesh and blood; he was no marble or cast-iron image insensible to desire or feeling. But his standards were high, his eyes unclouded, and he looked at life in a brave, honorable way.

He had enjoyed, immensely too, these weeks in Switzerland. Not for several years, perhaps never, had he allowed himself such a generous relief from business. He seemed to forget the serious responsibilities which usually rested on him, and for the time had the spirit and light-heartedness of youth. But of late the feeling had gradually grown upon him that it would be better if he went back to London. This, perhaps, was

why he refused to commit himself regarding the proposed trip to the Gemmi.

Everything went according to Miss Milltrum's schedule, for she had a way of bringing things to pass. It meant an early start from the hotel, at which Mr. Milltrum grumbled not a little, and a long, tiresome day for the whole party; nevertheless they reached the hospice on the summit an hour or two after sundown.

It was a rare evening, one only to be had in Switzerland at the close of a superb August day. But most of the travellers were too weary to enjoy the glorious view from the summit, or later watch the moon rise on the distant mountains. Miss Holbrook, however, having more of youth on her side, and with a stronger poetic endowment than either of the Misses Milltrum, was loath to house herself on such a night when the heavens were so filled with beauty, and the earth glowing as if transfigured. She sat near the doorway of the hospice, revelling in the glory of the scenes around her. Paul had provided her with extra wraps, for the air, though strangely still for such an altitude, was crisp and cold, a sharp contrast from that of the valley below. He sat on the veranda steps quietly smoking, waiting for the moon to come up from behind the mountains from which the sunlight had just gone. Hardly a sound broke the mysterious stillness. There was no tinkle of distant cow-bell, no horn-

blast echoing among the hills, no songs of Swiss peasantry, so weird yet so full of melody. The sky was almost cloudless, and the stars hung so low that they seemed like immense dewdrops quivering in heavenly light.

"If you are not too tired, Miss Holbrook, suppose we walk to the top of this hill. The view, I think, is better than here, and if fortune smiles upon us we may see the moon give its evening blessing to the Matterhorn."

Paul's voice was not much louder than a whisper, for he felt the spell of the strange silence which rested on the mountains.

Without saying a word Miss Holbrook rose from her chair, and after fastening her travelling-cloak, which she had thrown loosely over her shoulders on coming to the veranda, came quietly down the steps to where Paul was standing.

"The light will be better in a few minutes," he said in the same low tone, "but the walking is rather uncertain here. Please take my arm."

Silently she accepted the proffered arm, but in doing so her hand slightly trembled.

"Are you cold?" Paul asked, anxiously.

"Not very, and I shall soon be warm enough if the walking is all like this. Isn't it rough?"

The walking was difficult, for in the uncertain light Paul more than once missed the path. But they managed to scramble along, and without special mishap reached the top of the hill.

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Here they found a rather primitive pagoda, or, more properly, a sort of crow's nest, not an uncommon structure on many Swiss mountains.

For some time they sat in silence, as just then the moon was rising from what seemed like mountains in the sky, and the distant summits, which only an hour before had the glow of a divine fire, now glistened in silvern light.

"Oh, how beautiful!" Miss Holbrook murmured, softly, constrained finally to speak.

Paul caught a glimpse of her face, and though the light was yet dim, he could see her eyes were full of tears. Instantly he thought of Miriam Saxby, and the effect that such a scene would have had upon her, for he keenly remembered how strangely sensitive and impressionable she was.

"You are not cold now, I hope?" he asked, going over to Miss Holbrook, and turning up the wide collar of her travelling-cloak, so that it formed a hood.

"Thank you. I am exceedingly comfortable. I am so grateful that you asked me to come up here. The view is much finer every way than from the hospice veranda."

As she spoke the light of the moon shone full on her face, and again Paul thought of Miriam Saxby, for the likeness was now more startling than ever.

Oh, how he wanted to take her in his arms,

to gather her gratefully to his breast, to press loving kisses on her quivering lips; to welcome her back from the valley of silence, and to pour into her wondering ears the story of his loneliness during the terrible years of her absence! Never did he have such a fearful battle with himself. Everything that he had of will, of self-restraint, of self-control, was needed in that hour. One moment of weakness, and he surely would have yielded, for the love of his early manhood had returned, bringing with it the unutterable longings and yearnings of nine weary years.

“Miss Holbrook,” he finally said, speaking with unnatural calmness, and at the same time lighting a cigar, only, however, as a pretence, “may I tell you a little story, a personal story, one which in some way relates to you?”

Miss Holbrook looked at him wonderingly, but when she saw his face immediately there rose before her the scene in the American Chapel, for at that moment he seemed exactly as he did then. And she also remembered her singular feeling of recognition, a feeling of which she had afterward spoken to Mr. Milltrum, and from which she could not escape. Though she knew that Mr. Bedford was married, for the Misses Milltrum often referred to Judith, and though she knew nothing whatever of the circumstances involved in that marriage, she had the distinct impression that in some way her life was related to that of

Paul Bedford, but how or why she could not imagine.

She was not sufficiently versed in the world's ways to understand the significance of that impression. For the judgments of the world are always severe. And the eyes of the world are very sharp, just as its ears are very quick, and its tongue quicker and sharper and more severe than all else. But of these things Miss Holbrook knew nothing. Her mother had never been anything but a sweet, innocent girl, and would never be anything else, though she lived to be a century old. Her father was a frank, ingenuous boy when he died, despite his splendid ability and famous scholarship. Miriam, therefore, had a noble birthright of utter unfamiliarity with certain forms and conventions.

Her life, too, had been so secluded that she knew almost nothing of the shams, the hypocrisies, the hollow, unmeaning pretences, under which society often disguises itself. During these weeks at Interlaken, when she was seeing Mr. Bedford every day, her mind was not vexed with confusing questions, neither was she troubled as to what others might say. And, as no suggestion had come from the mother, or the faintest hint from the Milltrums, it never once occurred to her that any possible harm could result from an acquaintance in every way so delightful. Still, she could not entirely dismiss a feeling of uneasi-

ness when Mr. Bedford asked permission to tell her a story, frankly saying that she was in some way related to it. But what could she say in reply? To refuse would be not only ungracious, but significant. For that would imply a singular penetration on her part, and perhaps cause him to think that she had divined some secret which he had been striving to conceal.

"May I?" he asked again, observing her hesitation. "But perhaps you are weary, and would prefer returning to the hospice?"

"Please tell me the story," she answered, in a whisper.

Paul began with Mr. Saxby's summons to Pelham, and rapidly traced the beginnings of his acquaintance with Miriam up to their marriage and her death. Then he spoke of Judith, nor was there any lack of either kindness or chivalry in what he said. Finally he mentioned the strange meeting in the American Chapel, when it seemed to him as if he had looked upon one who had risen from the dead.

"I cannot possibly understand it," he said. "I am simply bewildered. And every day only deepens the mystery. After I recovered from the first shock in Paris, I thought the likeness was merely a natural coincidence, its effect greatly heightened by the presence of Doctor Keithburn, who recalled so vividly the memories with which he was associated. But since coming to Interlaken the

impression made in the American Chapel has been deepened a thousandfold. To me, therefore, you are not Miriam Holbrook; you are Miriam Saxby! I did not mean to speak of this to you. It may possibly grieve and distress you, but sometimes I imagined that there was a look of inquiry in your eyes, as if there was some question in your heart which I only could answer. If I have done you wrong in telling you this story, forgive me."

As Paul finished speaking he turned away from Miss Holbrook and looked down into the Rhone valley, sleeping so peacefully in the moonlight. Miss Holbrook sat as one in a dream. Every word of the story to which she had just listened carried a strange meaning to her heart, but she attempted nothing by way of reply. Of the reality of the story she had no doubt. How could she? Had she not weeks before, in her conversation with Mr. Milltrum, affirmed most positively that the stranger she saw in the American Chapel had some mysterious relation to her own life?

And evidently Paul Bedford did not expect either question or reply, for after a time he said, very tenderly:

"I hope you will not think that I have taken an undue advantage of your kindness, Miss Holbrook, but I could not go away without telling you my story."

Then they went back to the hospice, Miss

Holbrook going to her room to think over what she had heard, and Paul remaining on the veranda to watch the mountains gleam and glisten in the moonlight.

IV.

THE DESCENT

“**T**HIS is pleasure, I suppose. Pure, sweet, unalloyed pleasure. How happy I am! And you look gloriously happy, Peggy. Anything more delightful, no one could imagine. Maud, of course, can hardly contain herself. What a comfort we are less than half-way down! A whole week of this would be paradise.”

Mr. Milltrum was the speaker, and he was delivering himself with much freedom.

The steep, zigzag descent of the Gemmi Pass had been undertaken according to Miss Milltrum's plan, but the party had been tardy in getting started, and, as the sun in August rarely fails to keep schedule time, the walk down was a hot, toilsome affair.

The guide, comfortably laden with shawls, wraps, overcoats, and small hand-bags, moved on with enviable ease, though stopping wherever it was practicable to give the travellers a chance to rest. But a pause on the steep side of a Swiss mountain, where the path is cut in the rock and

with no trees to make a shadow against the sun, affords little rest or refreshment. Mr. Milltrum, therefore, was having things to say, and he was saying them with the courage of a native-born American.

“I am so glad, Peggy, you thought of this trip. How I have lived all these years without crossing the Gemmi is simply a miracle. My shrinking shoes, my clinging clothes, my beaded brow, my blistering back, are profuse in expressing the happiness I feel. I shall certainly change my will when I get back to the hotel. Everything goes to you, Peggy. You deserve it. Had it not been for your thoughtfulness, I should now be sitting in an easy chair on the Victoria veranda, smoking one of Paul’s cigars, or bibulating some cool and grateful beverage, the possibilities of lunch at a seasonable hour suggesting things agreeable to my vigorous appetite. Thanks to you, Peggy, I am here sweltering in this heat, oozing at every pore, dying for a drink, and enjoying a bliss, the memory of which will never leave me.”

“But, uncle, think of the view from the summit! You said this morning it was worth a journey of ten thousand miles. You went into raptures over it.”

“Did I? It is so long ago that I don’t remember. However, I take it all back. What concerns me now is not views, but —”

"Shoes," Maud said, promptly. "We warned you, uncle, but instead of wearing an easy, comfortable shoe you have on dancing pumps. No wonder you suffer, you poor dear."

"And these are what you call dancing pumps? These double-soled, rope-stitched, iron-spiked brogans? But perhaps you are right, for a more fantastic toe I never saw, or one with such tripping propensities. If your idea of dancing means sprawling, or gyrating top-fashion, then these dainty creations are surely dancing pumps."

As Mr. Milltrum spoke he ruefully contemplated his foot-gear.

"We haven't much farther to go," Miss Milltrum said, soothingly.

"Only about two hours more, with the sun getting hotter every minute, and the breeze leaving us as we get into the valley. I am so glad, Peggy, you insisted on this trip, and still more that you allowed me to be one of the party. I never can be sufficiently grateful."

By this time the guide had readjusted his burdens and was respectfully standing, thus intimating his readiness to continue the descent. The Milltrums, therefore, though without marked enthusiasm, resumed their journey.

At the request of Miss Milltrum, when the party was leaving the hospice, Paul Bedford had commissioned himself Miss Holbrook's attendant cavalier, and, as he had crossed the Gemmi before,

the services of a guide were not essential. So they went on a little in advance of the Milltrums.

When they started Miss Holbrook was constrained and embarrassed, for Paul Bedford's strange story of the night before was vivid in her mind. Indeed, so deep had been the impression which Paul's recital had made, that after going to her room she remained awake half of the night, wondering what it all could mean. Nor was it so much the story in itself, for she remembered Mr. Milltrum's words, "Nearly every person we meet suggests a resemblance to some other person;" but it was her appropriation of that story as a personal experience. From the first meeting with Paul Bedford she was conscious of a mysterious relationship, and that consciousness had only strengthened during these weeks at Interlaken. Just as he at times would look at her and see the living counterpart of his lost Miriam, so she would look at him, her mind haunted with vague, indistinct memories. But, try as she would, nothing tangible suggested itself. She went back to the days of her early girlhood, the period of visions, of dreams, of innocent romance, and she even recalled some of her favorite heroes in fiction, with the hope of finding Paul Bedford's prototype, and thus possibly account for the strange influence which possessed her.

But all in vain. Her youthful heroes had either been dashing cavaliers, whose deeds of bravery

were worthy of eternal fame, or soulful troubadours, whose songs lingered on the ear like bells at eventide. With a mother whose life had been one sweet romance, with a father whose genius led him to the heights of self-sacrifice, Miriam's ideal of manhood was surely different from that embodied by Paul Bedford. At first wonder, surprise, curiosity, and various other virtues peculiar to the feminine mind, entered into her study of the situation and its problems. But after a time these gave way to deep perplexity and serious mental distress. She was glad, therefore, that Mr. Bedford had been recalled to London, and would leave Interlaken before many days. In his absence she might perhaps work out of the maze where she was wandering, or obtain some solution of the mystery which so far had baffled her.

What avail, though, would that be now? Only the night before he had told his story, and as she listened her heart responded most strangely, and, while she gave him neither word nor look by way of reply, she was certain that he felt the sympathetic current which flowed as from a spring of infinite depth.

No wonder, therefore, at her embarrassment when Miss Milltrum placed her in Paul Bedford's charge, and she mentally resolved to keep with the other members of the party as much as possible. But this she found was not practicable.

The Gemmi Pass on the Rhone valley side is not intended for groups and companies to go abreast. So nothing remained but a quiet acceptance of the plan suggested by Miss Milltrum. For some time after leaving the summit she was comparatively independent, but soon the walking became increasingly difficult, and occasionally looked more dangerous than it really was. At such times Paul insisted on her taking his arm, and then again he would firmly clasp her hand, fearing she might slip at some sharp corner where the fence looked unsafe. Ere long she found Paul's arm a grateful assistance, and almost unconsciously would reach out her hand when help was required.

They stopped frequently, partly to keep within easy distance of the Milltrums, but more, perhaps, to enjoy the glorious views which so distinguish this passage of the Gemmi.

When about half-way down, they met a German professor and his wife, the wife on horseback, the professor on foot. The professor appealed to them for help and advice. He said his wife's horse insisted on walking at the extreme edge of the path, and that she was frightened almost to death. For some reason, the professor went on to say, the guide only shook his head when remonstrated with, and was as stubborn as the horse whose bridle he was holding. Being very stout, and evidently not accustomed to moun-

tain climbing, the professor looked unhappy and uncomfortable. His face was almost scarlet, he was bathed in perspiration, and while speaking he mopped himself with a handkerchief of heroic proportions. Discovering that Miss Holbrook spoke German, he was overjoyed, for his English was severely strained in the effort to explain his situation. Miss Holbrook spoke to the professor's wife, and tried to comfort the nervous woman by assuring her that the Pass was not as dangerous as it seemed, and had almost persuaded her to resume the journey, when the horse kicked loose a large stone and sent it over the edge, where it went leaping from cliff to cliff. Then the professor's wife screamed, the professor shouted, and if the guide had not held the horse with a hand of iron the results might have been serious. The hysterical woman declared passionately that nothing would induce her to go a step farther, that the horse was a vicious brute, that the guide could not be trusted, that she was certain they would all be killed, and that people were only idiots and fools for attempting such things. But after a time, thanks to Miss Holbrook's soothing words, she lost something of her fear, though positive in her determination not to go to the summit.

Miss Holbrook suggested to the professor that he allow his wife an opportunity to rest, which

might result possibly in her being able to resume the journey.

“In that case we will have lunch,” he said. “It is many hours since breakfast. And you will join us, will you not? It will do my wife much good, and give me great pleasure as well.”

Fortunately, there was a sheltered nook close at hand, and from the professor's capacious hand-bag various supplies were produced, by no means either displeasing to the eye or unpleasant to the taste. To say the least, the situation was novel. Here were Miss Holbrook and Paul Bedford lunching midway in the Gemmi Pass with a German professor and his wife whom they had never seen until that hour, whose names even they did not know, and from whom they expected to part when the meal was ended. But travel is usually suggestive of adventure, and without novelty life would be a very tame affair. And the professor was so grateful for Miss Holbrook's kindness to his wife that to decline his hospitality would have seemed ungracious. Besides, a breakfast at the Gemmi hospice is not always as substantial as some might desire, and a brisk walk in the morning air, however romantic or inspiring, tends ultimately to hunger. Mr. Milltrum had made that discovery some time before, nor had he much difficulty in persuading his nieces to pause at a suitable place and diligently explore certain lunch-baskets with which the guide had been provided.

This will explain why that great and good man was not present to share in the hospitality of the grateful German and his yet more grateful wife.

"I have not been in your country," the professor said to Paul, after learning he was from New York, "but my wife, she has relations there. Perhaps you have seen them. They are in New Orleans."

Paul intimated gently that New Orleans was not a New York suburb, but the professor went on:

"You Americans travel much, very much, and a hundred miles make a small journey for you."

"A hundred miles!" Paul said to himself, as he thought of the distance between New York and New Orleans.

"It is of my wife's uncle that I am speaking. He lives in New Orleans. But we cannot get letters from him. And there is some property which is now in the courts. But the property is little, not enough to pay for a lawyer to go to New Orleans. So it has waited for nearly ten years. Carreau is the name of my wife's uncle."

"Carreau!" Paul exclaimed.

"Yes, Victor Carreau. Did you know him?"

The professor looked eagerly at Paul, whose face betrayed the interest he felt.

"There was a Victor Carreau in New Orleans with whom our firm had some dealings," Paul answered, quietly, "but he died ten years ago."

Paul had a keen remembrance of Mr. Milltrum's sad visit to New Orleans at that time, and the still sadder results which had followed it.

"He have one daughter; her name was Judith. He send picture of her to my wife. My wife always carry picture of Judith, so that she show it to Americans."

"I have it here," the professor's wife said, bringing out from her side-bag a little photograph-case, which she handed to Miss Holbrook.

Miriam looked intently at the strikingly handsome but imperious face, little dreaming that she was holding in her hand the portrait of Paul Bedford's wife. Both the professor and his wife watched her eagerly, hoping to detect some sign of recognition, but as Miss Holbrook had never seen Judith the photograph to her was that of a stranger.

"You may have met this lady," she said, giving Mr. Bedford the card. "Any one who has met her would certainly remember her. Isn't she brilliantly handsome?"

Paul barely glanced at the photograph. One brief look convinced him that it was Judith's picture. Then, with a strange expression, one which Miriam had never seen on his face before, he said to the professor:

"This is a photograph of my wife."

Of course the professor had to exclaim, "*Mein Gott in Himmel!*" then shake Paul's hand most

vigorously, as though inducting him into covenant relationship. And of course the professor's wife forgot her recent terrors, in the joy of finding a family representative in this unexpected way.

For the moment Miss Holbrook was forgotten, so she quietly withdrew from the group, and went over to where the guide was standing. Just then the Milltrums made their appearance, and ere long Mr. Milltrum, with characteristic heartiness, was sharing in the excitement caused by the discovery of Paul's relationship to the professor and his wife. Under these new conditions, it was only natural that the professor should propose returning with Paul Bedford and his party, a proposal to which his wife gave grateful assent. Nor did the guide demur, particularly when he was given to understand that he would be a gainer by the transaction.

"No more mountains for me, Peggy. I am through. I have had all the mountains I care for. Giddy young creatures like you and Maud may enjoy gliding and sliding, and coasting and roasting, but for the future I will take my mountains in pictures. How my feet smart! Don't I wish we were all back in Interlaken. Just catch me again on any such rampage as this."

"Now, uncle, it really wasn't so bad, after all. And you walked the last part of the journey like an athlete. I was proud of you."

"Maud, you mean well. At least, there are

stray moments when you mean to mean well. This is one of them. But don't overwork it. Your suggestion concerning my athletic propensities strains me. And it isn't any use. Now that I am here, I don't intend to budge from this cubby-house of a hotel until my feet resume their natural proportions, and my neck loses its present lobster hue."

"You are not half as badly used up as Professor Schuman. Poor man, what a time he had!"

"No wonder. Think of a man of his build attempting the Gemmi Pass! But then, every man is not of athletic type, is he, Maud?"

"No use asking you to take a walk, I suppose," Paul Bedford remarked, as he came out of the hotel and looked inquiringly at Mr. Milltrum.

"No, sir. This village may contain the seven wonders of the world, and seventy times seven more of other things, for all I care. Explore it as you please. Turn it inside out. Buy anything and everything that strikes your fancy. But from this porch and easy chair I will not be dragged by any one. Before you go, Paul, fill my cigar-case. Isn't Miss Holbrook going with you, Peggy?"

"No, she complained of a headache and went to her room soon after lunch. She will probably be down before we get back."

There was nothing imaginary in Miss Hol-

brook's headache. The hot sun, the long walk, and the unusual fatigue may have been contributing causes, but possibly Paul Bedford's story of the night before, and the singular way in which she came to see the photograph of his wife, affected her more than she would care to admit. Judith's face haunted her. Though frankly conceding its beauty, and feeling also something of its mysterious power, she could see in fancy a mocking look in the eyes, and a curve of disdain on the lips. Turn where she would, that face followed her. At times the eyes had a gleam of hatred, and the lips seemed cruel and pitiless. She began to wonder why Mr. Bedford had married the imperious beauty, for in his story he had said very little of Judith. Then another question thrust itself upon her. Why had not Judith sought to win the love of her husband? Had her pride been aroused because of his devotion to the dead Miriam? But no matter how she reasoned with herself no light came to her bewildered mind; instead it was only mystery upon mystery.

Going down-stairs, she found Mr. Milltrum in an easy chair, the very picture of comfort and content.

"Isn't this delicious?" he asked, when she had seated herself in a chair not far from his. "My future mountain climbing will be done in a rocking-chair."

Miss Holbrook smiled.

Then they went on to speak of the recent haps and mishaps, ending up with the meeting of Professor Schuman and his wife.

"Paul has promised the next time he is in New Orleans to send the professor some entries and dates from the church register. These things, it seems, are necessary to wind up the estate."

"Did you know Mr. Carreau?" Miss Holbrook asked, innocently.

Mr. Milltrum turned away his head, flicked the ashes from his cigar, then looked wistfully at the mountain along whose rocky path he had travelled that morning.

Miss Holbrook felt that her question had touched some tender memory in Mr. Milltrum's heart, and was sorry she had asked it. Glancing around to see that they were alone, Mr. Milltrum said:

"An old man's story is usually a dull, stupid affair. But I feel in the mood, Miriam, for telling you one."

It was not a long story. Tragedies seldom are. The comedian may smile and grimace to almost any length, because wit and jest have no relations with sorrow or death. But when people are speaking of shattered hopes, broken hearts, ruined lives, desolate homes, their words are not as rockets that bespangle the heavens, but as the bell that tolls when one is carried to his burial.

More than once Miriam wiped the hot tears

from her cheeks. Again and again the sob came to her throat. And when Mr. Milltrum had finished she took his hand lovingly in hers and kissed it, as she would the hand of a king.

She now understood why Paul Bedford had married Judith Carreau, and just as clearly why the marriage was such a miserable failure.

But that night, even while she slept, the face of Judith troubled her, and in her dreams she could see the eyes gleam maliciously, and the lips curl with contempt.

V.

“MIRIAM ! O MIRIAM ! ”

WHEN the Milltrum party returned to Interlaken three days later, Paul Bedford found a letter from Mr. Saxby, which stated that Mrs. Saxby's health was so far restored as to permit her removal from Paris, and that Doctor Barington, who was with them at the Continental, strongly urged their going to Switzerland. Mr. Saxby added that he had written to the Victoria, and hoped they would reach Interlaken before Paul left for London.

Going to the hotel office, Paul learned that the Saxbys were expected that evening, Mr. Saxby having so wired them the day before.

Paul was at the station when the train came in. Mrs. Saxby saw him before he saw her, and greeted him as a mother would her son. To Mrs. Saxby Paul seemed strangely related. In his presence she was able somehow to recall the absent Miriam. When he was near she could not be persuaded that Miriam was far away, and at such times she would listen for her voice, or

glance about the room to see if she were not present.

With Paul living, it was difficult to convince Mrs. Saxby that Miriam was really dead. Naturally, she was distressed when he married Judith Carreau, and at first resented it keenly. But when Paul told her the circumstances of his marriage, and the nature of his obligations to Mr. Milltrum, she at once acquitted him of any disloyalty toward Miriam. Indeed, she was more deeply attached to him than ever, as she now knew positively that Judith could never take Miriam's place in his heart.

"You see, Paul, we are travelling in state," Mr. Saxby said, pleasantly, as Doctor Keithburn and Doctor Barrington got into the hotel coach with their party.

"You certainly have a royal chaplain," Paul replied, as he smiled at Doctor Keithburn, "and as a court physician Doctor Barrington easily heads the list."

"We are only obscure Pelhamites, far from the land of our fathers," Doctor Keithburn remarked, in his quaint way.

"Pious pilgrims in quest of holy knowledge," Doctor Barrington added.

"Such modesty overwhelms me," Paul suggested, slyly.

"As a Wall Street flower, a dainty, delicate, timid little thing, you are of course easily over-

whelmed,” Doctor Keithburn observed, sympathetically.

“As a quiet, retired spot, where men become glaringly modest, Wall Street deserves the parchment with the double seal,” Doctor Barrington said, insinuatingly.

By this time the coach was drawing up to the hotel, and soon the Saxby party had gone to their rooms to dress for dinner.

On entering the dining-room with Mrs. Saxby, Paul glanced over to the corner where Mrs. Holbrook and Miriam usually sat, but from the appearance of their table it was evident they were not expected to dinner. Miss Milltrum was also absent from her accustomed place, but Maud explained that her sister, with the Holbrooks, had gone to the Jungfrau to meet some friends who had just arrived.

After dinner there was the usual adjournment to the veranda, where the ladies sipped their coffee, and the gentlemen smoked their cigars, both functions being materially enhanced by Mr. Milltrum’s humorous account of the Gemmi Pass escapade.

“Next time I will chaperon a young ladies’ boarding-school. I am now qualified for it. Of course, there are compensations. One hour you are shivering with cold, the next hour baking in the heat; then again you will be as hungry as a bear, and at another time dying for a drink. Don’t miss it, Doctor Barrington, it is the oppor-

tunity of a life. And be sure to have Doctor Keithburn go with you. You will inspire him with everlasting gratitude. My nieces, I think, would like to go again. Maud is just aching for another chance. We were gone only four days, but red-letter days they surely were. Perhaps you could persuade Mr. Saxby to go. He shakes his head. Well, don't let that discourage you. Parties go from here every day. And some of them come back to gloat and glory in their achievement. I am doing that now — gloating over the victims who will start from the hotel to-morrow, and glorying in the hope of recovering the use of my feet some time between now and Christmas."

"I made that trip when I was a student in an insane hospital," Doctor Barrington said, with inimitable gravity.

"And I when I was a patient under Doctor Barrington's care," Doctor Keithburn solemnly remarked.

"And I a few months before getting married, as a preparation for the troubles of matrimony," Mr. Saxby added, smiling at his wife, whose chair was next to that of Paul Bedford.

Later in the evening most of the party went to the Kursaal, only Mrs. Saxby and Paul remaining on the veranda. They sat talking earnestly, for they had many things to say to each other, though Miriam was the chief subject of

their conversation. Slowly the light faded from the sky and the shadows gathered on the distant mountains. But the cool, calm twilight was delicious, especially to Mrs. Saxby, who had so recently left Paris, where the heat had been almost unendurable.

“I have been so desirous of seeing you, Paul, particularly for some weeks past, for I have had the strangest dreams — no, I can’t call them dreams, in fact, I don’t know what to call them — about Miriam. Do you know, I had an impression that she was in Paris! That Sunday when you came to our hotel with Doctor Keithburn I distinctly felt her presence.”

How well Paul remembered that Sunday! But how singular that Mrs. Saxby, who was unable to go to the American Chapel, and consequently did not see the mysterious stranger there, should have been so influenced!

“You look surprised, Paul, and I don’t wonder at it; nevertheless, if you had told me that Sunday you had seen Miriam in the American Chapel, it wouldn’t have startled me in the least. I am serious, Paul.”

And Paul knew she was by her face, her manner, and the earnestness with which she spoke.

“Of course I never speak of these things except to you. Even Mr. Saxby doesn’t know anything about them. I once gave Doctor Barring-

ton a hint which he might have followed up, but instead he wrote a prescription."

Like most physicians, Doctor Barrington believed that a sound body was essential to a sound mind, and, as it was his business to take care of the body, he usually made thorough work of it.

"Then lately, Paul, I have had such a longing to come here. And I don't understand it. There is really nothing in the place for me. Mr. Saxby, I know, would have much preferred Lucerne. He said I would find more of an American colony there, and probably a number of my friends. But I wanted to come here."

"And that, of course, settled it," Paul said, with a smile. "My only regret is that you didn't come a month ago. This is a quiet, restful spot, and I am certain it will do you lots of good. Mrs. Holbrook, a friend of Miss Milltrum, came here last month, and her health was wonderfully improved. I am awfully sorry that I must leave to-morrow."

As Paul spoke he observed Miss Holbrook and Miss Milltrum go across the street to a curio shop much patronized by tourists, and then a few moments later he saw Miss Holbrook come slowly up the path which led to the hotel veranda. As the Jungfrau, where she had been visiting, was within speaking distance of the Victoria, Miss Holbrook, following the custom of Inter-laken, was without hat or wrap, save a dainty

little shawl thrown loosely over her shoulders. In accordance with an almost invariable rule, her dinner-gown was of soft white silk, and made after a style from which she rarely departed.

As Paul looked at her he was instantly reminded of the Miriam of Pelham days, and, though the resemblance no longer startled him as at first, there were times when it seemed strangely impressive.

Then it suddenly occurred to him that in Mrs. Saxby's weak and nervous condition, the appearance of Miss Holbrook might seriously affect her. And especially such an appearance as she then made. For there was nothing lacking to complete the illusion. The twilight only heightened the effect. He must, therefore, in some way, divert her attention, at least until Miss Holbrook had entered the hotel, and then he would cautiously broach the matter of her strange resemblance to the Miriam whom they both so lovingly remembered.

“Have you seen this?” he asked, excitedly, taking a package from his pocket and opening it with unwonted eagerness.

But he was too late.

“Miriam! Miriam! My darling! My darling!” Mrs. Saxby cried, and starting from the chair she ran down the veranda steps, and throwing her arms around Miss Holbrook's neck kissed her again and again.

“Paul, she is not dead! She has only been away. And now she has come back again. O Miriam! My Miriam!”

Then with feverish strength she drew Miss Holbrook's head upon her breast, and embraced her with a tenderness of which only a mother is capable.

Fortunately for Miss Holbrook, Paul had told her that the Saxbys were coming to Interlaken, and with his own story so vivid in her mind, she was able to understand something of the feeling which possessed Mrs. Saxby. She did not, therefore, attempt to remove herself from Mrs. Saxby's arms. Neither did she have any desire to do so. Nor did she refuse any of the kisses that were being lavished upon her. She even returned them, and with a passion that was almost startling. To Paul, who was the only witness of this strange scene, it seemed as a meeting of mother and daughter after years of separation.

But a shock so sudden and overwhelming was too much for Mrs. Saxby, weakened as she was by a serious protracted sickness, and with the words, “Miriam! My Miriam!” she swooned away. Paul tenderly carried her back to her chair on the veranda, when Miss Holbrook said, quietly, “Leave her with me. Send to the Kur-saal for Mr. Saxby. Miss Milltrum is just across the street. Tell her to come.”

Very soon Miss Holbrook had all the assist-

ance necessary, and when Mr. Saxby arrived with Doctor Barrington, Mrs. Saxby was resting easily in her own room.

Later in the evening Doctor Barrington asked Paul Bedford to state the circumstances under which Mrs. Saxby had been so affected. Paul told him, beginning with the impression first made upon himself in the American Chapel, then his meeting with Miss Holbrook in Interlaken, finally describing the scene so distressful to Mrs. Saxby.

“Then it is more than a mere resemblance?” Doctor Barrington asked. “Sometimes, you know, there are tricks of features and reproductions of expression, which at first are very marked, but afterwards we discover how deeply we have been mistaken.”

“I have often been deceived,” Doctor Keithburn remarked, who had listened attentively to Paul’s story, “but the surprising thing to me is the infrequency with which nature repeats herself. Considering that we are all more or less alike, it is really marvellous that we can maintain our identity.”

“Of about the same height, as you say Miss Holbrook is, dressed as Miriam was in the habit of dressing, with just light enough to impart a certain mysterious quality, and then your conversation undoubtedly awaking tender memories in Mrs. Saxby’s mind, I can readily see why she was moved so strangely. Besides, the trip from

Paris must have fatigued her. But she insisted on coming right through. I never knew her to be really obstinate before. I warned her again and again, but to no purpose. Now we have the result."

Doctor Barrington had indeed cause for complaint. Most faithfully, but with rare tenderness, he had cautioned Mrs. Saxby, urging her to make the journey by easy stages, and giving her substantial reasons for his advice. Usually she was very obedient to her medical adviser. And for Doctor Barrington she entertained profound respect. For thirty years he had been coming to her home, and her confidence in his skill was unbounded. But in this instance she would not be guided by him, and, with what seemed sheer obstinacy, allowed herself hardly any rest until she reached Interlaken.

"She won't get over this for weeks," he said, sadly. "Anything relating to Miriam affects her strangely. It is nearly ten years since Miriam died, but Mrs. Saxby at times feels it as keenly as when the dear girl was buried. What a sweet child she was!"

As Doctor Barrington spoke he rose from his chair and walked to the end of the veranda, where he stood for a few minutes watching the light die away in the sky. Then he came back and sat down again. And it was now almost dark, as dark as it ever is in Switzerland during

August, for the evening twilight like a dissolving view only fades into that of the morning, with almost nothing of real night between. For some time the three men sat in silence, each busy with his own thoughts. Then a soft voice was heard:

“Mr. Bedford, may I speak with you a moment?”

Instinctively all three turned in the direction of the speaker, when Doctor Keithburn exclaimed, “Merciful heavens, it is Miriam Saxby!”

“No, not Miriam Saxby, but Miss Holbrook,” Paul said in a low, intense tone, glancing at Doctor Barrington, who stood intently regarding the figure which had also startled him.

“Excuse me, gentlemen,” Paul added, going to the door at which Miss Holbrook was standing.

“Doctor Barrington thinks she will be all right in the morning,” they could hear him say. “Please do not allow yourself to be anxious about her. And won’t you try to get some rest, Miss Holbrook. I feel distressed on your account.”

“I am so sorry that this happened, Mr. Bedford,” they could hear her say, and the voice seemed as that of the Miriam whom they had both known so well. “It was, perhaps, thoughtless of me, but I never imagined —” the rest died away in a whisper.

Then they heard:

"Good night, Miss Holbrook. I may see you in the morning; if not, good-by."

After this followed a soft murmur, when the door shut gently, and Paul came back to his chair on the veranda.

"I am not surprised now at Mrs. Saxby's delusion," Doctor Keithburn said, "the resemblance is simply wonderful. What possible explanation is there, Doctor Barrington, for such a thing?"

"There may be some distant relationship, a family connection that might account for it. Heredity is a curious thing. Nothing is more uncertain or freaky. Sometimes children in the direct line will be ignored, and the distinct family likeness apparently die out, and then it will suddenly reappear in some branch or offshoot where no one expected it. In this case the resemblance is most remarkable. No wonder Mrs. Saxby was overcome. I had to give her an opiate, a heavy one, too, and I confess to some anxiety when she returns to consciousness."

"She will probably remember the experience of this evening?" Doctor Keithburn asked.

"That depends. She may regard it as a dream or hallucination, and consequently say nothing about it. Two or three times in Paris she was disposed to be visionary, but I gave her no encouragement. She will hesitate, therefore, before mentioning this to me."

"But she is bound to see Miss Holbrook almost

any time, and what then?” It was Paul who spoke.

“Frankly, I don’t know. Of course Miss Holbrook can’t be spirited away, neither can she be kept in hiding until Mrs. Saxby leaves Interlaken. I wish she could be persuaded to go with you to-morrow. That would simplify matters immensely and give Mrs. Saxby a chance to work out of her nervous, morbid condition.”

“Are you serious in this suggestion?” Paul asked, with singular anxiety.

“Not serious in suggesting that Miss Holbrook be asked to surrender her claims and privileges here to accommodate Mrs. Saxby. That would be preposterous. Nevertheless I am serious in wishing she could go with you to London by the morning train.”

“Of course I couldn’t propose such a thing.”

“Certainly not. But I intend seeing her in the morning, and learning, if possible, something of her plans. At all hazards, Mrs. Saxby must be kept very quiet for a day or two.”

There was no need for Doctor Barrington to be concerned regarding the movements of Miss Holbrook. Wise, indeed, is the man who allows a wide margin for the improbable and the unexpected. It is the mysterious to-morrow that makes life such a wondrous thing.

While Doctor Barrington, with clouded brow and anxious heart, was carefully considering what

he would say to Miss Holbrook in the morning, and if possible relieve his patient from serious complications, a telegram was flashing over the wires from London. It was addressed to Mrs. Holbrook, and read :

“Come at once — Murray seriously ill. I am very anxious. BERTHA.”

In less than an hour Mrs. Holbrook was preparing to leave for London by the morning train. Murray was the only brother of her late husband, and Bertha was his wife, a dear, sweet, but delightfully helpless woman, no more fitted to cope with this rough, brawling world, than duchess lace is for the mainsail of a pilot-boat. No sooner, therefore, had Mrs. Holbrook received the telegram than she wired a reply, and at once began her preparations for the journey.

“Didn’t I hear you say that Mr. Bedford was going to London to-morrow?” she asked Miriam, who was assisting the maid in packing their trunks.

For the moment Miriam had forgotten Paul Bedford’s intention of leaving on the morning train. Her mother’s question, however, vividly recalled his words of parting on the hotel veranda only a few hours before. She remembered also her peculiar feeling of sadness at hearing him bid her good-by. Perhaps she was mistaken,

still she imagined that, instead of the formal “Miss Holbrook,” he had said “Miriam!” But even more distinctly there came back the recollection of her almost uncontrollable impulse to say “Paul,” and as she thought of this her face flushed in confusion.

“I believe Mr. Bedford is going to-morrow,” she answered in as steady a voice as was possible just then.

“I am very glad. It will be so much pleasanter for us. And I like him exceedingly. He is my ideal of a well-bred American gentleman. By the way, Miriam, I heard that Mr. and Mrs. Saxby, intimate friends of Mr. Bedford, had just come from Paris. He may postpone his journey on their account. But I hope not. Dear me, how selfish I am!”

When Mrs. Holbrook mentioned the Saxbys, Miriam thought that her mother must have heard of the veranda incident, colored and exaggerated, and might question her as to its meaning. She was, therefore, much relieved to learn that Mrs. Saxby’s sad illusion and its unfortunate result had not yet reached her mother’s ears.

While the packing was going on in the Holbrook apartments, Paul Bedford was just as busy in his, and though he would not leave Interlaken unless Doctor Barrington’s report of Mrs. Saxby’s condition warranted his doing so, matters in London were urgent and called for immediate

attention. Very early he went to Doctor Barrington's room, and learned that Mrs. Saxby had slept soundly most of the night, and, unless hindered in some unexpected way, her recovery was only a matter of time.

So Paul left by the hotel coach, little dreaming that the Holbrooks had already started for the station in a carriage ordered the night before. Judge then of his surprise when he saw Mrs. Holbrook and Miriam waiting on the platform. There was little time for lengthy explanations, and just as little need of them. Soon the travelers had taken their places and were on their way to London.

VI.

A DAY AT SEA

THE journey from Interlaken to London, lacking the charm of novelty, and being made with all possible haste, afforded little enjoyment to any of the travellers, and for some time a measure of restraint seemed to prevail. Mrs. Holbrook, an exceedingly gracious and entertaining woman, quick to note and appreciate anything worth seeing, and by no means lacking a sense of humor, spoke but seldom, and then merely in reply to some inquiry; while her face had a worn, anxious look, the result, doubtless, of the telegram announcing Mr. Murray Holbrook's dangerous sickness. Miriam sat by the window looking at the country through which the train was speeding, her thoughts meanwhile busy with the strange events of the past weeks. She went back to that day in the American Chapel, when she saw Mr. Bedford for the first time, and recalled most distinctly the singular emotions his presence aroused in her heart. Then she thought of their meeting a few weeks later in Interlaken.

What a meeting that was! With what intentness they had looked at each other, both evidently afraid to ask the question that was so eager for expression! Then she remembered, and with startling vividness, the evening on the Gemmi, when Paul Bedford told her the story of his life. How strange it was, and how unlike anything she had ever heard before! Most wonderfully that story had been corroborated by Mrs. Saxby, whose pathetic cry, "Miriam! O Miriam!" kept ringing in her ears.

Nor did she fail to recall the exclamation of Doctor Keithburn the night before at her appearance on the hotel veranda, or the look of amazement on the face of Doctor Barrington.

But while all these things perplexed her, deeper far was the mystery hidden in her own heart. Her extraordinary likeness to Miriam Saxby might in some way be explained. Such things, though rare, were not unknown. What really troubled her was the feeling that in some mysterious way her life was gradually blending with that of Paul Bedford, nor was it as the coming together of two separate rivers uniting in a common stream, but rather as if some dividing barrier had been removed and the seas again made one.

Miriam Holbrook was not a sentimentalist. Neither was she possessed with a high and foolish spirit of romance. Those who knew her best were wont to speak of her freedom from many of the

vagaries common to young womanhood. It may have been that the responsibilities involved by her father's death, and the need of her mother for special care, developed a maturity far beyond her years, but when other girls of her age were full of dreams and fancies, she was taken up with concerns of infinitely greater moment. No wonder, therefore, she was much perplexed regarding her mysterious relationship with Paul Bedford. And every day the mystery only deepened.

Paul Bedford, in his corner of the railway carriage, was also doing some serious thinking. Tolerably certain of himself and of his ability to hold his feelings under control, yet since that night on the Gemmi he had been anxious to leave Interlaken, and in the excitement of business forget, if possible, the influences that were encircling him. The remembrance of that night was anything but pleasant to Paul Bedford. Indeed he was angry with himself for having spoken as he did. He felt that he had taken an unfair advantage of Miss Holbrook. In no way could he justify himself. He realized that he had played an unworthy part. Gladly would he have effaced the whole scene from his memory. But that he was unable to do, for it came back to him again and again, each time seemingly with more distinctness than before. Hence he was sincerely glad that urgent business compelled his immedi-

ate return to London, hoping thus to liberate Miss Holbrook from the restraint involved by his presence, and at the same time secure for himself an opportunity to escape from a position daily more embarrassing.

But how futile were his efforts! For here in the same carriage was Miriam on her way to London, and in a measure under his care. It seemed like destiny.

Of course he contrived to make the journey comparatively easy, but railroad travelling on the continent in the heat and dust of August is not an unmixed pleasure. At Calais Mrs. Holbrook wisely retired to her stateroom, for the sail to Dover, though short, has various possibilities of discomfort. Miriam, however, remained on deck despite the rough sea and the heavy sky, which lowered and threatened all the way across. In a steamer-chair, and measurably protected against the wind and spray, she seemed to enjoy the churning, restless waters, the swift motion of the ship, and even the sky, though so sullen and dangerous. Occasionally she would close her eyes, only to hear more intently the swish of the waves beating against the steamer, or the rough blasts which at times sounded in the funnel like a giant's horn. She was not in the mood for speech, at least not until, when within a short distance of the English coast, she took Paul Bedford's arm for a brisk promenade on the upper deck.

"There is surely Viking blood in my veins," she said, as they looked back over the channel in which the steamer's tracks were sharply defined. "I am a veritable child of the sea. It is simply a passion with me. Of course I enjoy the mountains, that is, after a fashion. I recognize their sublimity, and at times they strangely impress me, but I never fell in love with a mountain. Not even in Switzerland did I see one concerning which I would care to use my leap-year privilege."

"The average mountain is not unduly responsive," Paul replied, as he noted the color tinge her cheeks, the eager flash of her eyes, and the kindling light on her face. "But don't blame the mountain. It is a solid, substantial affair, not given to the emotions of which most mortals are capable."

"Exactly where it differs from the sea," she responded, earnestly, "for the sea is almost human in its moods and feelings. Sometimes it fairly rages with passion, a mad, mighty, terrible rage, as though stirred to its depths with an anger as fierce as it is uncontrollable. Then again it sobs and moans so plaintively that one would think it had a soul, and that soul was crying out in despair. At other times how it throws itself on the beach with the glee and frolic of a child! Who knows but I was a Viking centuries ago?"

Paul glanced keenly at the eager, sensitive face which unconsciously had reflected the changing moods of the sea, passing from anger to sorrow, and from sorrow to gladness, just as the waves caught the sunlight or the shadows that fell from the sky. Then he wondered if Miss Holbrook had ever heard Miss Milltrum propound the theory so tenaciously held by one of her friends. Perhaps she divined his thought, for Miss Holbrook continued :

"You are not shocked, I hope, Mr. Bedford, at my suggestion of having been a Viking. Seriously, the idea of a former life has often occurred to me. But I seldom refer to it. Once when the conditions were suggestive, and desiring to learn his views, for Miss Milltrum had spoken several times of her friend, I mentioned the subject to Mr. Milltrum, and told him of — " Then she paused, and flushed uneasily, suddenly remembering Mr. Bedford's relation to that conversation.

"Mr. Milltrum rarely allows himself to leave the ground," Paul said, pleasantly. "As a flying-machine he is not a brilliant success. In fact, he has more foot and less wing than even the average man, and that is saying a good deal, for the average man is of the earth earthy."

"If you put it that way, there can be only one reply. Mr. Milltrum is a very definite and practical man, the result largely of his business life.

Still there have been times when his keen, searching eyes have sought for a break or cranny in the wall, hoping to discover something on the other side.

“How strangely things are hidden from us! There is really nothing in life but mystery. It begins in darkness, and it ends in death. So far as material things are concerned, we are, in some respects, better off than my Viking ancestors, but life itself is even less understood now than then. Sometimes I think we are only as so many telegraph-poles, upon which invisible and mysterious wires are strung, utterly ignorant, however, of the messages constantly flashing from one office to another. But, excuse me, Mr. Bedford, I don’t often let myself go after this fashion. The sea, though, is really responsible. *Mal de mer* with me takes this form. It is a part of my Viking heritage.”

Then they began to talk of other things, and ere long the steamer was at its dock, and the travellers on their way to London. On arriving at the Langham, they learned that Mr. Holbrook had experienced a slight paralytic shock, and though there was no immediate cause for alarm, his wife was nervous and anxious. Later in the day she said, tearfully, to Mrs. Holbrook and Miriam:

“I don’t think I should feel so distressed if we were at home. The people here have been very

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kind, and Sir Wallace Russell, who has been attending Murray, is, I am sure, as skilful as any physician in New York, but he is not like Doctor Malvern, our own family doctor. And Murray is very anxious to get home. Almost the first thing he said when he could speak was to ask me to make arrangements for sailing on the earliest available steamer. But the steamers are all crowded. I can't get any kind of accommodations until late in September. I haven't dared to tell Murray, as it will be such a disappointment."

"But, Berthā, I don't see how you could possibly take Murray home as he is now. He is almost helpless. Wouldn't it be better to wait for three or four weeks? We will stay with you, and you know what a splendid nurse Miriam is."

"Now that you and Miriam are here, of course I feel differently about staying. But Murray is as anxious as ever. Not an hour ago he was asking me when we were going to sail. That telegram which came a few minutes since was from the Cunard office, saying that the room which had been conditionally promised to me was now definitely engaged by the party to whom it had been first assigned. I am just about at my wit's end."

And the dear woman looked exactly as she felt, which, under the circumstances, was not to be wondered at.

"Perhaps Mr. Bedford could help you," Miriam suggested.

"Who is Mr. Bedford?" Mrs. Murray Holbrook eagerly inquired.

"Uncle Murray, I am sure, knows him. He is a partner of Mr. Milltrum."

"Of Milltrum Brothers?"

"Yes."

"And is he in London?"

"He came with us from Interlaken. The Milltrums are there now," Mrs. Holbrook answered.

"Where can I see him? How can I reach him? Every moment is of importance. Is there any way, Miriam, of communicating with him?" Mrs. Murray Holbrook was evidently resolved to follow up the possibility suggested by Miriam.

"Mr. Bedford, I believe, has rooms in this hotel. I am positive he expects to be here for dinner. Anyhow, we can leave a message at the office."

"Yes, but the steamer offices will be closed long before then. And that means another day. I don't care anything about myself, but I know how your Uncle Murray feels. I almost dread going to his room, for he is sure to ask me about it. Can't we do anything before dinner? No one dines here until eight or after."

Seeing that her aunt was in such distress, Miss Holbrook went down-stairs, and ere long was at

the telephone, a hotel clerk having given her the London address of Milltrum Bros. Fortunately, Paul Bedford was in the office, and at once promised his assistance. Then he added :

“Tell Mrs. Murray Holbrook to have no anxiety whatever. I have a room on the White Star steamer leaving a week from Wednesday. I will arrange for its transfer to her. I may be able to do even better, but cannot say now.”

When Miss Holbrook returned with Paul's message, her aunt immediately went to the room of the anxious patient, and gladdened his heart by telling him the day she had arranged for their leaving London, and the steamer on which they expected to sail.

In a few days Mr. Murray Holbrook was able to leave his room, and Sir Wallace Russell pleasantly remarked one morning that much of the improvement in his patient was due to the hope of a speedy return to New York.

“Next to the Swiss, the Americans suffer most from nostalgia,” Sir Wallace said. “An Englishman will go to Africa or India, anywhere, in fact, and, so long as he can get a London paper once in awhile, or see a redcoat now and then, he is quite contented, but an American is never happy unless within hailing distance of New York. As I remember New York, — I was there two or three years ago, — it seemed in process of reconstruction, new buildings going up, old buildings

coming down, and with a suggestion of digging in most of the streets. But I suppose everything is settled now. How is it, Mr. Holbrook?"

The idea of New York being settled, as Sir Wallace Russell meant, caused Mr. Holbrook to smile.

"Come over next year, Sir Wallace," he said, cordially. "Make us a visit. Give Mrs. Holbrook and myself a chance to show how much we appreciate your services. You have been very kind, and we are profoundly grateful. As for New York being settled, the probabilities are that the buildings which were going up when you were there have been torn down long since. Three years is a long time in New York. But come over, Sir Wallace."

For a native-born American, whose forebears were not unacquainted with Plymouth Rock, Mr. Holbrook was surprisingly fond of giving Sir Wallace Russell everything that belonged to him by way of title; and the fact that a baronet, a physician summoned at critical times to Windsor, had been in attendance upon her husband, was by no means displeasing to Mrs. Holbrook.

Three days before the day of sailing Mrs. Murray Holbrook, who had been under a severe strain for some time, and whose endurance for the weeks of her husband's sickness was really surprising, so relaxed nervously that Sir Wallace Russell insisted that she should remain in Lon-

don for several weeks, or that Mrs. Holbrook and Miriam accompany her to New York.

Miriam was not prepared for this. She had intended to return to Switzerland as soon as possible, and later to go into Italy, remaining for the winter, hoping by this arrangement to make permanent the decided improvement in her mother's health. Besides, she was aware that Mr. Bedford expected to sail on the same ship with her Uncle Murray and his wife, and, while she would not willingly flinch from either duty or obligation, under the circumstances the Continent had more attractions than an ocean steamer.

But Sir Wallace Russell was obdurate. He would give no consent to any other proposal.

So once more Paul Bedford's kindly offices were sought, with the result that the Holbrook contingent, himself included, were passengers on the White Star steamer which sailed from Liverpool on the Wednesday following.

Much to Miriam's surprise, and pleasure as well, the Milltrums were also on board, and, as Mr. Milltrum had frequently met Mr. Murray Holbrook in New York, the group soon resolved itself into a family party.

True to her Viking ancestry, Miss Holbrook was a good sailor; most of her time, therefore, was spent on deck; neither did what the purser called a "capful of wind" or a dash of "Scotch mist" affect her perceptibly. She played shuffle-

board with Mr. Milltrum, promenaded with Paul, ventured on an occasional game of chess with her uncle, conducted afternoon teas with the Misses Milltrum, and managed to keep busy from morning to night. She carefully avoided either moonlight or starlight tête-à-têtes with Paul Bedford, though, to do him justice, he seemed equally careful. No one looking at them, when tramping up and down the deck, or in the general group, would have suspected the singular relation in which they stood to each other; and when alone they never once referred to their experience in Switzerland. By mutual consent that chapter was sealed. Once Miriam was tempted to speak of Mrs. Saxby, for naturally she had a desire to know the result of their strange meeting in Interlaken. Still she refrained from making any inquiries, lest other matters might be involved. Fortunately, the Milltrums had not heard of the Saxby episode, Doctor Barrington having managed in some way to keep it within the circle of those particularly interested.

One afternoon, when within a day of New York, Miriam reclined contentedly in her steamer-chair, enjoying the play of the sunlight on the sea. Her mother had gone below, ostensibly to give some directions to their maid concerning the packing incident to the coming morrow, but in reality to have a quiet hour in the seclusion of her own room, a custom by no

means unusual with ladies whose fiftieth birthday is an affair of the past. Paul sat down in Mrs. Holbrook's chair, then relieved Miriam of a book which she was holding in her hand, but not reading. The inscription on the fly-leaf caught his eye, and, as he read —

“To Miriam; a birthday token from her mother, August 3” —

“Excuse me, Miss Holbrook, but does this mean your birthday?” holding up the book open at the inscription.

“Yes,” she answered, wondering at his very evident anxiety.

“Miriam Saxby was born on that day,” he said, in a strange, hushed voice, looking at Miss Holbrook as he spoke.

For some time nothing was said, Miss Holbrook dreamily regarding the sea, Paul holding the book reverently in his hand. But they were both thinking intently, and both marvelled at the strange coincidence. Finally, after a long pause, Miriam inquired, in a tone barely audible:

“In what year was Miss Saxby born?”

Paul told her.

Starting from her chair, she looked at him in amazement.

“Mr. Bedford, Miss Saxby and I were born at the same time, for I was born on the third of August in the year that you have named.”

Paul had not time to express his amazement

at this second coincidence concerning the birthday of the two Miriams, for just then Mr. Milltrum appeared, rubbing his hands with the glee of a boy, and saying that a pilot-boat was sighted.

"Which means New York to-morrow in time for early dinner, the captain says," he added, joyously.

"That is, provided you escape the custom-house," Maud remarked, who at that moment was worrying over the "declarations" essential to such an escape.

"Or the hospitalities of Ellis Island," Miss Milltrum suggested, "for you have been borrowing money from me ever since we left Liverpool."

"Then there are the possibilities of quarantine," Maud added.

"Or coming in under contract as a skilful workman, and therefore being useful to the country," Miss Milltrum said, as she looked at her uncle warningly.

"No trouble on that score, Peggy. The idea of Uncle Lewis being useful to the country puts a burden on my imagination to which it is not equal."

"All because I couldn't marry them to a count or a duke, Paul. Goodness knows I tried hard enough. I think I might have done something with Peggy if Maud hadn't been there, or with Maud if Peggy had kept out of sight. I offered

coal-mines, oil-springs, pork-yards, patent medicine, but it wasn't any use. And now they abuse me, and threaten me with all sorts of things. I had two or three chances to dispose of Miss Holbrook, but then — " Before he could finish, Mr. Milltrum was led off a willing captive by his nieces, for he was never quite so happy as when he had one on his arm, and plenty of deck-room for a promenade.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Murray Holbrook came, so that Miriam and Paul had no opportunity to resume their conversation. But Miriam's words came back to him again and again: " Miss Saxby and I were born at the same time, for I was born on the third of August in the year you have named."

VII.

AT MRS. BEDFORD'S RECEPTION

ON reaching New York, Paul Bedford found business matters so serious and complicated as to require all the energy he possessed. Desiring to relieve Mr. Saxby of burdens that were taxing him severely, with Mr. Milltrum's consent, the firm of Saxby & Co. was absorbed by Milltrum Bros., an arrangement which meant for Paul more care and embarrassment than he had anticipated. For some time Mr. Saxby had not been fortunate in his investments. His right hand had lost its cunning. His mental vision was not so clear as in former days. He might easily have retired from business with a fortune ample for all his needs, but, like a gambler anxious to win back the money he had lost, he kept on taking risks from which wiser men turned promptly away. Then the inevitable followed. At this juncture Mr. Crewe applied to Paul Bedford, who arranged matters with such delicacy that Mr. Saxby never once suspected how deeply he was involved.

All this took place months before Paul went to Europe with the Milltrums, and, while he knew that the Saxby interests would require careful handling, the statement given him on his return by Mr. Crewe was more serious than he had imagined.

A mysterious but powerful combination had been formed in his absence, which seemed to direct itself chiefly against the interests of Milltrum Bros. Anything that Milltrum Bros. favored, this combination opposed. If the one sold up, the other sold down. And, like most combinations, it was unscrupulous. Clerks in the office of Milltrum Bros. were tampered with, and plans, supposedly confidential, leaked out in the strangest way. Who was behind all this Paul could not even surmise. But the combination had apparently unlimited capital, and during the summer gave Mr. Crewe much anxiety.

Paul therefore devoted himself to business so closely that he had little time for anything else. Besides, he had a feeling that in the near future a terrible battle would have to be fought, one requiring his entire energy and resources.

The affairs of Milltrum Bros. evidently gave Judith small concern, for soon after returning from Newport she entered upon a series of dinners and receptions far exceeding anything she had attempted since coming to New York.

Judith had made good use of her summer in

the Llandoff cottage. And her friend Mrs. Helmsley had proved a valuable ally. Mrs. Helmsley, though old enough to serve as chaperon, was exceedingly popular with the younger set, and ere long Llandoff Cottage acquired a distinction which could not be ignored.

Before the season was half over Judith was invited everywhere, and while she was careful to render Cæsar his full due, she never failed to see that Mrs. Cæsar had no cause of complaint. When she went out for the afternoon drive, men eagerly sought her recognition, women smiled upon her most graciously, while the hosts of young, unmarried people of both sexes gave her unbounded admiration.

It was known, of course, that Milltrum Bros. had been specially cabled from Downing Street, and that her husband had gone to London to consult with the authorities regarding an English loan. This explained his absence from Newport, more satisfactorily, perhaps, than the absence of some other husbands could be explained.

As Judith was tactful, discreet, with the Southern genius for hospitality, never once instituting any form of rivalry, it is not surprising that when the season closed her visiting-list included families within whose doors no Milltrum had been allowed to enter.

Not having seen or heard anything more of the mysterious Yoba, Judith naturally concluded

that his appearance in Nevada was an accident with which she had no part whatever. So she dismissed the matter from her mind.

"Doesn't Judith look gloriously handsome to-night?" Miss Milltrum asked Maud, as they stood in the spacious parlor of the Bedford mansion, and observed the ease and grace with which Mrs. Bedford received her guests.

"How superbly she is gowned," Maud said, in reply. "Judith has no right to say 'My face is my fortune,' for she has a fortune in her gown, another in her figure, and still another in her air. Just see her now with Lord Paddington. One would think she had been brought up at Windsor. There is Miriam Holbrook! Surprising they have never met before. What a contrast they make!"

No wonder Maud spoke of the contrast between Judith and Miriam, as they stood for a few moments regarding each other. It was a meeting of the rose and the lily; the rose a Jacqueminot, rich, deep, passionate; the lily an Easter dawn, graceful, simple, exquisite. Judith regal, imperious, commanding; her eyes flashing proudly; her lips curving haughtily; every movement the embodiment of grace and power. Her gown, though brilliant, was sufficiently dark to bring into splendid relief her dazzling neck and shoulders, while the diamonds in her coils of black, shining hair sparkled as against a back-

ground of sombre velvet. Miriam, in contrast, was hardly of medium height, slight of form, quiet of bearing; her gown was quaint in its simplicity, and her jewels, unobtrusive pearls, were worn less for effect than because they were a recent birthday gift from her mother.

"Mrs. Bedford's crushes are the most popular things in town," Bert Vernon said to Mr. Milltrum, whom he found in the passage leading to the conservatory, where there happened to be some breathing-space. "Everybody is here."

"There is one body that wouldn't be here if its nominal owner had any say in the matter," Mr. Milltrum replied, grimly. "Why can't we be double-bodied, as guns are double-barrelled? Then I could say to one body, — the one capable of every form of fatigue, that can stand on one foot for half an hour at a time, can eat anything, drink anything, say anything, lie gracefully, smile perpetually, and do just what society expects, — you go out with Peggy and Maud. Then my other body, the one that has some sense in it, could remain at home, or find some amusement worthy of rational beings. Bert, this honestly is worse than crossing the Gemmi. Have you been here long?"

"Nearly an hour."

"Want to go home?"

"Do you?"

"Wanted to before I came."

At that moment Maud appeared.

"I have been looking everywhere for you, Uncle Lewis. Madame Dernage is going to sing. Don't you want to go to the music-room?"

"Never wanted anything so much since I was born. Where is Peggy? She is over there, Bert. Bring her in. Oh, the rapture of this moment!"

"Hush!"

"Maud, you surprise me. For one glorious hour I have stood in this hall, allowing myself to be jostled and jammed, pushed and pulled, walked over and sat on, and yet outwardly I have not committed murder."

"But, uncle —"

"And now to be permitted to tear and trample my way into the music-room, with you clinging tenderly to my arm, is a bliss which I don't deserve. But I am not selfish. Bert, poor boy, would have gone home only that I sent him after Peggy. See how happy he looks! And there is Clarence Fillmore smiling like a basket of chips, persimmon chips, I mean. But, seriously, Maud, something is the matter with Clarence. He looks as if he had seen a ghost. Bless my soul, if he isn't staring at Miss Holbrook as though she had risen from the dead!"

Clarence Fillmore's conduct most assuredly justified Mr. Milltrum's remark, for he kept looking at Miriam in a way that could not fail to attract attention. His eyes followed her across the room.

He scanned her face with obvious eagerness. Not a movement or expression escaped him. Finally his wife, who had not a drop of jealous blood in her veins, nudged him, and then softly whispered :

“ Miss Holbrook is very attractive, but please don't stare at her so unmercifully.”

“ Holbrook ! ” he whispered in reply. “ Why, Kitty, I could have sworn it was Miriam Saxby ! The resemblance is simply wonderful. Even Mrs. Saxby would be deceived by it.”

Then Kitty remembered her voyage on the *Zidonia*, when Paul Bedford in the eagerness of romantic youth told her of Miss Saxby. And she also remembered how tragically Paul's romance had ended, for Clarence had written her the sad story.

Just how no one could tell, but it soon was whispered around that Miss Holbrook strikingly resembled the Miriam Saxby of former days. Hence before Madame Dernage had succeeded for the third successive time in climbing the gamutic ladder, and from thence diving into waves of gleeful sound, many of Mrs. Bedford's guests were regarding Miriam with curious and interested eyes.

Later in the evening, when the formalities had measurably relaxed, two of the younger matrons, whose voices had attained a fair degree of sharpness, so talked the matter over that Judith could not but overhear their conversation.

"I never saw anything like it," one of them said. "I could hardly believe my eyes. When I saw her standing near the piano I almost screamed."

"Then you were acquainted with Miss Saxby?" the other asked.

"We were intimate friends. We were at Vas-sar together. She was a lovely girl, and every one just adored her."

"She died within a few months of her marriage, I understand."

"Yes, and I don't wonder that Mr. Bedford was so terribly shaken at the time. We all pitied him, for he was simply devoted to her."

"And you say Miss Holbrook resembles her?"

"I couldn't tell one from the other."

"Mr. Bedford has doubtless observed this singular resemblance."

"I am sure he has. He couldn't help it."

"There are certain possibilities —"

"Particularly when you remember that his second marriage was a mere business affair. Every one knows that."

"He was in Europe last summer. Mrs. Bedford was in Newport. Business, of course," and the speaker smiled significantly.

"Most of his time, however, in Switzerland with the Milltrums. Miss Milltrum and Mrs. Holbrook are old friends."

"So the Holbrooks were there at the same time?"

"Yes; Mrs. Arlington met the whole party one evening at Interlaken."

"The situation is interesting."

"Very."

"And suggestive."

"Quite so."

Judith had no intention of playing the eaves-dropper, but she could not move away from where she was standing without betraying her presence to the youthful matrons who had so frankly discussed the situation.

At first she listened indifferently, then with languid attention, but finally with an eager desire to catch every word. There was also a corresponding change in her feelings, and when the conversation closed she was wrought up to a pitch of intense excitement.

Judith was fully aware of Paul's devotion to the memory of Miriam Saxby. And she was equally aware that the matrons had spoken the truth when they referred to his second marriage as "a mere business affair."

But it had never occurred to her that a second Miriam might arise, to whom would be given the love now spent upon the dead. For the dead Miriam she cared nothing whatever. Hers was not a nature to be much influenced by sentiment. That Paul should frequently visit the little ceme-

tery at Pelham, be careful of the flowers on Miriam's grave, observe her birthday in a way peculiar to himself, and give manifest proofs of his abiding love, did not affect Judith in the least. There may, possibly, have been times when she smiled at these things, but never openly. Once or twice she had seen Paul angry, when lightning flashed from his eyes, and there was a look on his face the memory of which remained with her. So, whatever her feelings were regarding Miriam Saxby, she held them in perfect control.

But now that a new Miriam had come, not a ghost nor a shadow, but a woman of flesh and blood, of power and beauty, whose social rank was equal to her own, and with whom Paul was already on terms of friendship, it meant for Judith a condition of things by no means enjoyable. For the first time since her marriage, she entertained the feeling of jealousy. It was a keen, sharp feeling, entering her heart like an arrow, where it remained despite her smiling face and gracious bearing. All at once she awoke to the fact that Paul Bedford was worth fighting for, and that she would not surrender him without a vigorous struggle. Her Southern blood was aroused. Her pride was assailed. The question of supremacy had been raised. The gossipy matrons, who doubtless represented many others, would find that their suggestive hints and still more significant smiles were valueless.

Going across the parlor to where Paul was chatting pleasantly with the Milltrums, she laid her hand on his arm with a more tender gesture than she was wont, and, giving the group one of her most alluring smiles, said:

"When are you coming, Uncle Lewis, to tell me of your adventures in Switzerland? From what Paul has said you must have had a delightful time."

"I shall write a book, Judith. Such experiences and adventures as mine should not be limited to a family circle. So behold me as a potential author."

"Will your book be published by subscription, or on the instalment plan?"

"Maud, somewhere in that question of yours, curled up snugly, is a base insinuation. And I resent it, as one who already feels the splendid throes of authorship."

"I cannot vouch for the throes, but the slidings and falls remain precious memories. There were times, uncle, when I sighed for a kodak."

"No doubt. So did I. Oftener perhaps than you imagine. The female form divine shows to singular advantage when scrambling in the Swiss mountains. I have seen both you and Peggy pose with remarkable aggressiveness, though just at that moment my ideal of womanly beauty was not fully realized."

"How about Miss Holbrook? She, I understand, was with you on these daring expeditions."

Judith imagined that Paul's arm moved slightly as she spoke, but her face lost nothing of its pleasantness.

"Only for Miss Holbrook we should now be immured in some Swiss dungeon, the subjects of profound sorrow to our friends. Thanks to Paul's splendid unfamiliarity with either the language or the habits of that country, we were in constant peril, from which she just as constantly delivered us."

"Which means that she was —"

"Guide, interpreter, mediator, paymaster; in short, without her our lives would have gone out in hopeless misery."

Mr. Milltrum spoke lightly, but Judith detected a note of seriousness.

"Paul is going South next week," she said. "Can you not manage to give us an evening before he goes? Suppose we say Monday. Wouldn't that suit you, Paul?"

All this time she kept her hand on Paul's arm, glancing into his face now and then with a smile for which some men would have faced a score of drawn swords. One of her sweetest smiles was given when the gossipy matrons, who had so enlightened her, were attentively regarding the little group. Judith saw them and smiled

again, and so winningly that Paul smiled in return.

"So you were with the Milltrum party," she said to Miss Holbrook, a few minutes later, who was about to rejoin her mother in the music-room.

"Not exactly with them, but we met in Paris, then again in Switzerland, and returned to New York on the same steamer."

"Miss Milltrum mentioned your name in some of her letters, and Maud, I think, spoke of a trip you all made over the Gemmi. You must have enjoyed it immensely. Mr. Bedford often refers to it."

As a historian Judith was more picturesque than accurate, for Paul had not even alluded to the Gemmi episode.

"He hopes to take another holiday next year," Judith continued, noting carefully the look on Miss Holbrook's face, "but he insists on my going with him. He says that moonrise on the Gemmi is the sight of a lifetime."

Judith's eyes, though apparently glancing around the room, were closely observing Miss Holbrook, who could not forbear a slight start at this allusion to the Gemmi moonrise. Instantly there flashed upon her the memory of that night when Paul Bedford told her his story, and she marvelled that he could so easily contemplate another visit to a place fraught with such sig-

nificance. She did not dream that Judith was merely sending out her arrows at a venture. That, however, was a habit with Judith, and often the arrows struck the target with as much precision as though they had been carefully aimed.

The appearance of Bert Vernon at that moment enabled Judith to leave Miss Holbrook without waiting for her reply, so smiling most graciously she went back to the reception-room, where she remained until after the Holbrooks had gone home.

As virtue is its own reward, Judith slept soundly that night, her head hardly touching the pillow before she was in the land of dreams. Miriam was not so fortunate, for she gave up more than half the night to a series of questions, each one more bewildering and perplexing than the other.

But while Judith slept Yoba was hiding in the shadows on the other side of the street, watching the house as a sentinel the prison where a traitor lies condemned.

VIII.

FATHER AUVERGNE OF ST. JOHN'S

WHEN in New Orleans Paul was reminded of his promise to Professor Schuman, which under the pressure of urgent business had been forgotten. Indeed, the matter had so completely escaped his mind that he had never even mentioned it to Judith. This he now regretted, for, having failed to get all the particulars from the professor, he might be compelled to spend more time on the matter than he could well afford.

Still, he was tolerably certain that the village spoken of by Professor Schuman contained at most three or four churches, and that to search through their registers need not involve more than one afternoon.

The train ride of fully two hours was by no means tedious, for, under the law of association, connecting the errand on which he was bent with the persons to whom it was related, he was led back to that day on the Gemmi Pass when he met Professor Schuman and his much frightened wife.

He could not forbear a smile as the picture came afresh to his mind, — the professor mopping, his wife protesting, the horse kicking, and the guide silent as a graven image. Other pictures followed in rapid succession, and before the brakeman called out the station where a stage was waiting for the train, Paul had gone over most of his Swiss experiences.

Naturally Miss Holbrook had a prominent place in this review, indeed, to tell the simple truth, he chiefly recalled the scenes in which she had a leading part.

Climbing up beside the stage-driver, with whom he was soon on easy speaking terms, his cigar-case effecting the introduction, Paul at once began his inquiries.

“You see that little church,” said the driver, pointing with his whip to a spire just visible in the distance, “that is St. John’s. Father Auvergne has been priest of this parish for more than twenty years. He knows every family in the county. You will find him at home, for he came in from New Orleans yesterday.”

In due time Paul was at the parsonage, where Father Auvergne gave him a most courteous greeting.

“Certainly,” he said in reply to Paul’s request. “The register is in the sacristy. We try to be careful in these matters, and I think you will have no trouble. Permit me to accompany you.”

It was a simple little church to which Father Auvergne led the way, very different surely from that of the Madeleine in Paris, or St. Patrick's in New York, yet Paul was strangely impressed as he went quietly down the aisle to the sacristy. His keen, well-trained eyes saw how plain most of the appointments were, yet everything was invested with a sacredness which touched him deeply. Paul Bedford was not in any sense a religious man. He had well-defined notions of business honor. The man who would cheat or steal, or evade an obligation he held in contempt. His games were never played with marked cards. He was alert, eager, daring, but he was not treacherous or dishonest. His simple word had the strength of a bond, and even his enemies had implicit faith in his integrity. At heart, however, he was something of a pagan, Sunday having for him only the significance of a holiday, while churches had really less value in his eyes than picture-galleries or places of amusements. He was not irreverent or frivolous, simply indifferent. Under ordinary circumstances he could have gone to the sacristy as to the office of a town hall where the "records" are kept, but he now felt strangely affected. The church seemed to have an atmosphere of prayer, of penitence, of spiritual desire, and had he been alone and given way to the emotions of that moment, he would probably have knelt on the

bare floor, and reverently bowed his head toward the altar where the holy candles were burning.

On entering the sacristy Father Auvergne went to a little safe in which the church register was kept, and at once turned back to the date Paul had mentioned.

"I remember Mr. Carreau very well," the clergyman said; "he was a brilliant man in his way, and under other conditions might have been successful, but he lacked ballast, and he was easily duped. I tried to reason with him at times, but visionary men are usually very obstinate. '*De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*'"

Paul made a copy of the entries in the register, having first asked permission to do so, referring also to his meeting Professor Schuman in Switzerland.

"I wonder what became of Victor Carreau's daughter. I disapproved strongly of her marriage, being positive she was making a sad mistake, but of course I had no authority to interfere."

"What marriage?" Paul asked, so thoroughly mystified and with such a look of amazement that Father Auvergne could hardly suppress a smile.

"Judith's marriage, of course — she —"

"What do you know of Judith's marriage?" Paul questioned, more mystified than ever.

"Not very much, except that I married her in

this room about three months before her father died."

"Father Auvergne, there must surely be some mistake! Judith Carreau is my wife. We were married in New York three years ago."

"Then you either married a widow, or she —" Instead of completing the sentence Father Auvergne went to the little desk on which the church register was lying, and turning to the marriage record, found an entry on which he placed his finger, and then looked at Paul.

"My God! can this be true?"

Paul's face even more than his words betrayed the agitation under which he was laboring.

"That entry is in my own hand," the priest said with marked solemnity.

There are times when the strongest men are so taken by surprise that not even a will of iron can resist the shock without giving some sign. The great ship, though plunging on after a huge billow has flung itself against her massive hull, quivers from stem to stern, and sometimes so careens that for the moment disaster seems inevitable. Thus it was with Paul Bedford. Though hardened by conflicts in which fortunes were involved; accustomed through years of business life to hold himself in perfect control, rarely allowing an expression on his face or a word from his lips save such as accorded with will; and in times of the wildest excitement con-

trolling his feelings by an exercise of power almost superhuman, here he looked as one bereft of reason, and there was a dangerous glare in his eyes as he stood facing Father Auvergne.

"And you married Judith to Bothwell?" he asked, when he was so far recovered as to be able to control his voice.

"Yes."

"In this room?"

"Yes."

"Three months before her father's death?"

"The date is in the register, Mr. Bedford."

"But, Father Auvergne, I married Judith Carreau. I filled out the certificate required by the marriage laws of New York. In that certificate her name was given as Judith Carreau, and as such she signed it in the presence of Mr. Milltrum and one of his nieces."

"And did the certificate have no mention of any previous marriage?"

"None whatever. On the contrary, it stated that she was single."

"I am very sorry for you, Mr. Bedford, sincerely sorry. What motive Judith had for so deceiving you I cannot imagine. Justice to you, and indeed justice to herself, required a plain statement of the facts in the case. Of course Bothwell was dead at the time of your marriage. That we must take for granted. Judith would not have dared to marry you had he been living.

Possibly there were some things connected with Bothwell that caused her to avoid any association with his name. Nevertheless, Mr. Bedford, she should have been frank with you. My sympathy may not have any value, indeed you would be justified in resenting it, still I must express my extreme sorrow at this most unhappy and mysterious circumstance."

There was a tender chord in Father Auvergne's voice, and so much genuine kindness in the clasp of his hand, that Paul, though he made no reply, could but feel the sympathy of the aged priest.

After a long pause, during which Paul stood at the little desk with his eyes fixed on the entry in the church register, going over each item in the record, every moment becoming more perplexed, Father Auvergne said:

"The stage connecting with the evening train leaves here at seven o'clock. May I ask you to accept the hospitality of the parsonage till then, or longer if you can remain. Kindly permit me to have this pleasure."

Hardly aware of what he was doing, Paul accompanied the priest to the little parsonage. Excusing himself, Father Auvergne went back to the church ostensibly to replace the register in the safe; his real purpose, however, was to leave Paul alone for a little while. The kindly priest had not lived in vain. Many years before he had learned the value of solitude. When a man

is fiercely battling with himself, engaged in a conflict that calls for all he has of strength, and on the issue of which much of life depends, the clack of tongues, however well intended, only irritates him to the point of madness. So the priest withdrew, nor did he return for nearly an hour. What an hour that was to Paul Bedford! What questions crossed and recrossed his mind! Why had Judith, when married to Bothwell, kept her marriage such a secret, shamefully deceiving her mother, who otherwise would not have written from her death-bed to Mr. Milltrum? Why had she allowed Mr. Milltrum to virtually adopt her, when she had a husband abundantly able to provide for her necessities? More staggering still, why had she married again under her maiden name, never once hinting at the ceremony performed by Father Auvergne? Because she was an orphan and a stranger, without a legal protector, he had yielded to Mr. Milltrum's desire. It was not her beauty, but her friendlessness that appealed to him. He had no love to offer her; that she knew, but he could at least give her the protection of his name, and install her as the mistress of his home. These were the conditions of their marriage, and while not expressed in legal or definite form, they were perfectly understood by Judith as well as himself. Then, as though nothing might be lacking to make the condition still more maddening, he remembered

Bothwell's murderous attack on Mr. Saxby, his flight to Boston, the report of the detectives who were sent in pursuit. And to think that Judith was actually the wife of such a man! But the question that thrust itself upon him and demanded an immediate answer was one for which he had no reply. He could not trust himself. He was too angry to be just. Others must decide a matter so serious as this. That he had been deceived, grossly, terribly, was very evident to him, yet what could he say, or what should be done under circumstances in every way so peculiar?

When Father Auvergne returned he found Paul Bedford standing at the window of the little parsonage, his face set like iron, and an angry light in his eyes.

"I have been praying for you," he said, quietly. "Yours is a heavy cross, my son; one from which the strongest man would shrink, and one which not even the strongest man could bear alone. So I have tried to ask God to help you."

"You mean that I must go on to the end, giving my name to a woman who tricked me into a marriage, and who for aught I know had a husband living at the time?"

Though Paul spoke indignantly, Father Auvergne was in no wise grieved. He had prepared himself to meet both anger and opposition.

"I am not surprised at your sense of outrage,

Mr. Bedford," he said as quietly as before. "In that feeling I sympathize, but there are times when for the sake of others great surrenders must be made. The idea of the cross is fundamental, not only to religion but to life itself."

"But, Father Auvergne, how can I allow a woman to retain my name who came to me with a lie upon her lips; actually perjuring herself at the time of her marriage; whose life prior to that marriage was a mockery; and whose course since then has been one continual deception? Surely the cross does not mean a seal of approval on treachery."

"Far from it. And you may be sure that Judith has carried a cross infinitely heavier than any have imagined. I cannot believe that knowingly she would have committed the crime you suggest. Perhaps, as I said in the sacristy, there were reasons why she was unwilling to have her name associated with that of Mr. Bothwell. We have time, and I have left word that we are not to be disturbed. Tell me the story from beginning to end."

It was a strange scene, — the aged priest sitting in his chair listening intently; Paul Bedford one time standing beside the priest's chair, the next moment walking up and down the little room, his hands behind his back, his head bent forward, his face pale with anger or flushed with excitement. But he told the story, nor was he inter-

rupted or questioned, Father Auvergne eagerly attentive to every word.

"And nothing was ever heard of Bothwell?" the priest asked, when Paul had concluded, and was once more at the window moodily looking out.

"Nothing."

"Nor of the steamer on which he was a passenger?"

"Not a sign."

"The detectives traced him to the ship?"

"Positively."

"Now, under the circumstances, what could Judith do? Bothwell evidently had some motive for keeping the marriage a secret. How he influenced Judith in the first instance I cannot say, probably through some hold he had on her father. Mr. Carreau was mixed up in some queer matters at one time. That I know, but the secrets of the confessional are sacred. Bothwell, as I remember him, was rather a handsome man, and Judith seeing in marriage an escape from poverty and also a way to help her father, consented to the arrangement. All this is mere surmise, yet I have reason to think it is not far from the truth. Coming back now to you, can you not see that when Bothwell was drowned, and no one knew anything of her marriage, how it would at once occur to Judith that the very best thing was to make no reference to it whatever? How could

she openly acknowledge her marriage to Bothwell after having lived so long with the Misses Milltrum, and being everywhere introduced by them as Miss Carreau? As time went on the difficulty of making such an acknowledgment greatly increased. When you appeared as a suitor, what could she do but let matters take their course, trusting that the secret would remain undiscovered?"

"And it might have so remained but for the purest accident. A chance question of yours, Father Auvergne —"

"No, Mr. Bedford, it was not accident. Nor was it chance. We use these terms because they are convenient, but in a world so small as this, and in which God's laws are supreme, there is neither chance nor accident. You met Professor Schuman in the Alps; his wife was related to Victor Carreau. An entry from a church register is essential. That you promise to procure; in rendering that service you come here. And here you discover the secret Judith has kept hidden in her own breast. All links in the chain of God's mysterious providence, a providence which invariably works out His divine will."

"But what am I to do?"

"Keep the secret which you have providentially discovered."

"How can I?"

"By refusing to share it even with Judith."

“Father Auvergne!”

“That is exactly what I mean. You have given me your confidence which I shall hold sacred. Why should you dismantle your home, publish your dishonor to the world, brand a woman with infamy, when by bearing your cross with the strength and dignity of a man you can not only save yourself but others as well? The secret is safe with me. So also is the record of the marriage. No one has access to the register except by my permission. Let everything stand and make the bravest, manliest fight of which you are capable. And may God bless and heal you, Mr. Bedford!”

Soon the stage pulled up at the parsonage gate, to which the kindly priest accompanied Paul, and with a cordial hand-clasp and a final benediction they parted, the one returning to his little church to prepare for vespers, the other going back to New Orleans with a secret that crushed him to the earth.

IX.

AN ATTACK ON MILLTRUM BROTHERS

ON returning to his hotel Paul was given a special delivery letter, and also several telegrams which had been received during the day. The telegrams he opened at once, as some matters of importance were pending; the letter he put in his pocket, reserving its reading for the quiet of his own room. When he had disposed of the business the telegrams involved and had retired to his apartment, he was not in the mood for reading letters special or otherwise. Though a man of immense resources, and capable of enduring the most severe strain, his interview with Father Auvergne had so exhausted him that he flung himself upon the lounge in sheer stress of weariness. He was not really angry with Judith; better for her if he had been. A man, no matter how fierce his wrath, cools down in time, the cooling process not infrequently resulting in generous forgiveness. But Paul's feelings were more of the nature of contempt. He felt that he had been tricked, duped, his sympathies played upon, and

all to gratify the desires of a foolish and unscrupulous woman. The more he thought over Father Auvergne's advice the less became his wish to follow it. He could not imagine himself living again under the same roof with Judith. To meet her daily, to see her preside at his table, to share in her social successes, to be compelled to hear congratulations on her receptions and gatherings, to go out with her to dinners and assemblies, yet all the while have the knowledge of her treachery and untruthfulness, seemed to him an utter impossibility. The mere thought of it was intolerable. Turning restlessly on the couch, the letter rustled in his pocket, and taking it out he glanced carelessly at the envelope. The writing seemed familiar, though for the moment he was uncertain. Opening it, he read:

“MY DEAR PAUL:—You so rarely are troubled with letters from me, that I am certain this one will be something of a surprise. And you will be even more surprised when you learn that I intend to be one of your most regular correspondents! Let me frankly confess that I have not treated you as I should have done. I have been remiss in many ways. I am very sorry that I went to Newport last summer instead of going to Europe with you as I had promised. And I am just as sorry for many other things. Won't you please forgive me?

“There is no need to remind you of the singular conditions relating to our marriage. You were very frank with me then, and I understood perfectly the nature of our mutual obligations. But, Paul, during the years of our married life I have learned to love you, to love you with all my soul, and while I do not ask that you abate anything of your affection for the Miriam of your early life, may I hope sometime to have a little place of my own in your kindly, generous heart? I will try to be worthy of it, Paul. I am really hungry for your love. My life has never been a happy one, far from it, though thanks to you it has been happier for the past few years than ever before. If you knew everything you would pity me; but why refer to things so unpleasant?

“This isn’t leap year, Paul, but I am going to make a proposal, nevertheless, which is that we begin all over again, only this time, instead of our marriage being an affair of business and settlements, let us make it one of real affection. What say you?

“Uncle Lewis says you are likely to be detained from home at least two weeks longer. Send me a telegram, Paul, and I will be on my way to meet you within an hour after receiving it.

“You will be glad to know that Miss Holbrook is likely to remain permanently in this city. There was a possibility of her going to Boston, the

Vernons having large interests there, but Bert has decided to live in New York. The engagement has not been formally announced, but it is generally understood.

"I am not much of a gossip, but this little item I know will interest you.

"I have made a sort of calculation as to the time this letter will reach you, and from that hour will look impatiently for a telegram.

"Send one, Paul, please do, for I am so eager to see you.

"JUDITH."

With the exception of the paragraph concerning Miss Holbrook, Judith wrote out of her heart. She was thoroughly sincere in this expression of her love for Paul. Ever since that night when she overheard the conversation of the two matrons, her one desire was that Paul might love her as she was learning to love him. And just as in the springtime, when the iron hand of frost no longer grips the earth, the pent-up forces held in such terrible restraint leap forth to meet the waiting sun, so Judith's love for Paul burst forth as a mighty, splendid flame. Hers was no schoolgirl sentiment; no silly, lisp-ing affectation; no summer night romance, fleet-ing as moonlight on the sea. It was a consuming passion, a fire which on the altar of her heart burned more intensely as the days went by,

In this particular her letter was honest, and Paul was constrained to admit the sincerity embodied in every word.

But there was no foundation for the reference to Miss Holbrook. That was a bit of imagination, and written for a purpose.

This Paul did not know; the paragraph therefore came upon him as a bolt from the blue. And just as Miriam wondered that he could speak so lightly to Judith of moonrise on the Gemmi, and insist that she go with him on his next year's trip, so he wondered that Miriam could become engaged to Bert Vernon, and with such complacency accept him as her future husband.

That was surely a bitter night for Paul Bedford, the heaviest, the strangest he had ever known. He never once thought of sleep. He sat by the window and looked out, one time at the sky where the moon was struggling with heavy, threatening clouds, and another time on the streets, now so still after the strife and tumult of the day. More than once the words of Father Auvergne came back to him:

"Yours is a heavy cross; one from which the strongest man would shrink; and one which not even the strongest man could bear alone."

The morning found him in the same conflict of emotions. To openly repudiate Judith involved an explanation to Mr. Milltrum, which would distress and humiliate him beyond measure. Yet

when he thought of so far accepting the counsel of Father Auvergne as to guard Judith's secret, he remembered that her letter demanded far more than that from him. She was pleading for love, while he was struggling against hate! She was thinking of a honeymoon, and he was planning for a separation! Poor Judith! She wanted to begin life, real life, with Paul, while Paul, perhaps poorer and more to be pitied, would rather have died than enter upon such a relation.

At breakfast, when looking over his mail, a cipher telegram was brought in. After reading it Paul immediately sent for a time-table, and, finding that a train would soon leave for the North, at once decided to take it. Before starting he sent a telegram to Judith:

"Thanks for letter. Am on my way home. Will see you in a few days.

"PAUL."

He also sent a long cipher despatch in reply to the one received, and addressed it to Mr. Crewe. Though pressed for time, he did not fail to write a brief note of thanks to Father Auvergne, enclosing with it a bank draft, which he asked the priest to distribute among the poor of his parish. At noon he was a hundred miles distant from New Orleans, on his way to fight the battle of his life.

As Mr. Neumarck sits in his chair in the Sembrada, he looks exactly as on the day Judith called for the jewel-casket. His face is as sharp, his lips are as thin, his eyes are as bright, and his expression as cruel as when he pierced her with a look, or smiled after her with significance. In an easy chair sits another man, younger, of heavier build, with large, baleful eyes, his face almost hidden under thick black whiskers. It is long after midnight, yet both men are full of eagerness, and seem ready for a protracted session.

"So your name is Simlick. Henry Simlick?" Mr. Neumarck asked, suggestively.

Simlick smiled.

"A mine owner in Nevada who has come to make some investments in New York?"

"That covers the case."

"And also to pay off some obligations of a strictly personal nature?"

"Precisely."

"Which obligations include some others not quite so personal?"

Simlick's white teeth gleamed under his thick mustache by way of reply.

"And as an instalment on these obligations you have been paying some attention to certain interests once owned by a Mr. Saxby, but now controlled by a firm known as Milltrum Brothers?"

"Yes, I have made a beginning."

"And your plan is to lead the parties named to the edge of one of your silver mines, and at the proper time allow them to fall in, while you stand at the pit mouth and watch them reach the bottom?"

"You evidently understand my purpose."

"The process is likely to be expensive."

"I am prepared for that."

"And it may take some time."

"I have been planning it for years."

"Milltrum Brothers will make a hard fight."

"The harder the better."

"Other men have tried and failed."

"I won't fail."

"Why?"

"Other men fought simply for money, and in time money buys money, so they compromise and one gives way to the other. With me it is a fight to the death. For Saxby I care nothing, though it was through his infernal trickery I was driven from New York."

"A good thing for you, nevertheless."

"Yes, but I owe him no thanks. He set the police on me, and, if it hadn't been for that steamboat business, I would have been taken in Portland. Still, Saxby doesn't trouble me. I am after higher game. Saxby acted like a fool last year, and got himself all tangled up. Paul Bedford in some way so influenced old Milltrum

that he consented to wipe out an ugly score he had with Saxby, and allowed the concern to be absorbed with Milltrum Brothers. To save Saxby's credit, Bedford has had to take on as heavy a load as the horse will draw. That I know. I intend to add to that load, and make the horse drop in his tracks."

"You are warmly attached to Mr. Bedford."

"Very. I have reason to be. When I learned that he was coming to Nevada, I arranged a little trip for him among the hills with the idea —"

"Of his remaining permanently in Nevada?"

"Possibly."

"And of his bride returning home a sorrowing widow?"

"If I had once suspected that Judith was the bride over whose beauty the people out there went raving mad, let me tell you Paul Bedford would have had a very different reception. But I never imagined such a thing. My revenge, however, will lose nothing by delay. There will be just that much more."

"Have you thought how all this will affect Judith?"

"Oh, yes! Judith hasn't been left out of the calculation. I intend to pay her handsomely. The fishes hadn't well started on their nibbling at my supposed body before she was over here for the jewel-casket. She wanted the jewels fast

enough, but she was more anxious about the marriage certificate, which, I am sure, went into flames as soon as she got to her room. Then within a few months of my supposed death she married Paul Bedford, actually using her maiden name."

"Rather a dangerous thing to do."

"Particularly when it is found out," and once more the white teeth gleamed and the eyes shot fire.

"You have arranged an attractive programme."

"And every number on it will be given."

"I would like to share in this entertainment of yours. You are not the only one who feels the burden of certain obligations. Bedford found out somehow that Cranburg was only a dummy, and that the concern was mine. Old Milltrum put in his oar, and fully a score of notes came back on my hands, young Vernon's, — you remember him, of course, — and Tom Shirland's, and others as well. I just managed to squeak out. But the whole thing had to go."

"Cranburg's was a paying concern in my time."

"And then what did that meddling, platter-faced fool, Clarence Fillmore, who is everlastingly poking about in his yacht, do, but run across the *Vampire* once or twice, and because he didn't like the looks of things he reported to the Inland

Revenue, and since then we haven't dared to move her from the dock."

"What about my old place on Burling Slip?"

"Nothing but a junk-shop. I have to keep it open and make a pretence of doing something, but the real business is gone."

"So you have a few little accounts to settle?"

"Just a few, and I thought we might go in together. Between us, I think we could manage to put up something of a fight. I have a trifle in the savings-bank," here Mr. Neumarck smiled sardonically, "which I am willing to invest in this business."

The agreement was made there and then, and from that hour each man gave himself unreservedly to the task of bankrupting the firm of Milltrum Bros.

This was the mysterious combination whose movements during the summer had given Mr. Crewe much trouble, and whose attacks of late had become so serious that he was forced to telegraph for Paul Bedford.

Paul's journey home was anything but pleasant. He understood thoroughly all that Mr. Crewe's telegrams implied. For months he had known that Mr. Saxby's interests would be a heavy burden, but that knowledge he had kept to himself, quietly meeting such obligations as matured, and preparing for others that were certain to come. In what way the secrets of his

private office had been revealed baffled him completely. And the results were serious. Claims poured in upon him. Almost every day large demands were made. Sometimes he was positive that Mr. Saxby's name had been used without warrant, but, as he was still in Europe, and practically unfit for business, it seemed impossible to secure any definite statement. Neither could he speak of these matters to Mr. Milltrum, for many years before, when Mr. Saxby was in the plenitude of his strength, and Mr. Milltrum sadly in need of help, his application was not only denied, but spurned so contemptuously that a bitter feud was the result. Paul therefore had great difficulty in persuading Mr. Milltrum to have anything to do with the affairs of Saxby & Co.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," he said, "you will find a nice mess. He has been playing ducks and drakes for over a year. I can't imagine what possessed him. He is in a score of things, any one of them enough to send him to the discount mill. Better let him go under, Paul."

"But he is Miriam's father. For her sake I must help him."

"True, and I don't blame you, but remember this is your affair, not mine."

And Paul did remember, so the whole burden came on him.

But far more than any business complication was he troubled concerning Judith. As the ex-

press rolled along, every hour bringing him that much nearer to New York, the question came up again and again. A public disavowal he dismissed instantly. He had not forgotten that Judith was his kinswoman, and that she was the daughter of Kate Dumont, once the promised wife of Mr. Milltrum. In fact, he had forgotten nothing that would inure to her advantage, for Paul was inherently just. But there was that entry in the church register. He could see the deep, black writing, every item given with a distinctness that haunted him.

He tried to read, but neither book nor paper had any interest for him. He went to the smoking-compartment, only to find himself out of gear with the genial, story-telling company assembled there. Usually temperate, when in the dining-car he drank heavily with his dinner, hoping the wine would dull and deaden him after a time, but it was of no avail. Finally he tormented himself with questionings as to Bothwell's death, wondering if he had been a passenger on the Portland boat. Every possible element of disturbance came to his mind on that ride from New Orleans, and he gave a sigh of relief as the train slowed up at the depot in Jersey City.

Going to the office, he spent some hours in consultation with Mr. Crewe, an interview in which Mr. Walters, the former secretary of Mr. Saxby, had no part, much to his surprise and

annoyance. That was not a pleasant day for Mr. Walters, for when Mr. Crewe went out from Paul's private office, it was with instructions to dismiss him instantly. Some papers found on his desk were so plainly intended for the mysterious combination that the question of leakage was immediately solved.

Then Paul went home. Of course the clerks envied him as he stepped into the carriage which was waiting at the office door. And other men, not clerks, looked after him admiringly as the carriage turned the corner at the Sub-Treasury. Why not? Had he not everything to excite both envy and admiration? Wealth unlimited, a rarely beautiful woman for a wife, a home in the most exclusive section of the city, these were all his; and yet he envied the light-hearted newsboys who jostled each other on the streets through which he passed!

X.

HUSBAND AND WIFE

NEVER did a woman look more alluring or attractive than Judith the evening Paul was expected home from the South. To do him honor, and as a proof of her devotion, she had sent an excuse to Mrs. Helmsley, who was giving a dinner-party that evening to which Lord Paddington, Count Novello, and sundry other notables had been invited. It must be confessed that Mrs. Helmsley did not accept Judith's regrets with very good grace, for she had counted on her assistance in making the evening one of unusual brilliance. She even went so far as to write an urgent note to Judith, begging of her to come, if for only an hour, as otherwise a number of her guests would be quite disappointed. But Judith was not seriously concerned for either Mrs. Helmsley or the guests who were bidden to her dinner. A much larger matter occupied her mind. Her thought was Paul; how to win him to herself, to make him her own, to be his wife, not in name only, but in the deep, splendid significance

of that word, and, having once gained his love, hold it with a fervor which nothing could abate. She selected one of her most becoming gowns, of a color of which she had heard Paul speak approvingly, and so arrayed herself that her beauty was well-nigh overwhelming. Usually she came downstairs just before the formal dinner announcement, but this evening, instead of going to the parlor, she went to the reception-room, with the hope of seeing Paul the moment he came in.

Paul had tried to prepare himself for this meeting. He knew it would be a severe ordeal, for, naturally, Judith would expect some response to the letter his telegram had acknowledged. During the day, one of the busiest and most exciting he had ever known, he had been troubled exceedingly with questions concerning Judith, and how best to meet the new condition of things. But just as he was leaving the office Mr. Milltrum came in, hearty and cheery as ever, though he knew that Milltrum Bros. was in the thick of a tremendous battle.

"I am going up with you," he said, addressing Paul. "Judith has arranged a fatted calf festival, in which I am to have a share. Peggy and Maud are there now. Meantime, we have a few minutes to spare, so we can compare notes by the way. Have you found out anything about our friends the enemy?"

"Not much; practically nothing, except that they have, apparently, plenty of money."

"And they are touching us on the raw?"

"Slightly."

"So far nothing very serious?"

"No; but they bribed Walters, and what that may lead to I can't tell."

"Well, they may go to Bagdad, or Jericho, or any other place they fancy. I like sport, good, honest sport, whether one is going for game or fish or anything else, but when it comes to low-down trickery, such as sneaking in on a cad like Walters, then, Paul, my boy, people of that stripe may go to the devil."

"Such a proceeding would have my approval," Paul said, with a smile.

"You haven't heard any time to-day that Milltrum Brothers is on Queer Street?" Mr. Milltrum asked, meaningly.

"No," and Paul laughed as he spoke.

"What, then, do you think of this?" and while speaking Mr. Milltrum gave Paul a letter.

"MY DEAR MR. MILLTRUM: — I overheard a conversation last evening which has troubled me exceedingly. By the purest accident I happened to be present where some gentlemen were discussing business matters, and one of the speakers said that the firm of Milltrum Bros. had recently lost a great deal of money, and unless helped in some

way would have to fail. You won't feel hurt, I am sure, at my suggesting that every penny I possess is at your disposal. I am not very familiar with business matters, but if you will kindly let me know where I can see you, I will arrange so that everything can be transferred to you immediately. Please, Mr. Milltrum, let me help you at this time. I really don't need so much money. Mamma, I know, will give me what I want. So just remember that I am waiting to hear from you, and anxious to do everything that lies in my power.

Very sincerely yours,

“MIRIAM HOLBROOK.”

Though so self-contained and impassive, Paul's face betrayed something of the emotion aroused by this letter. For it meant much more to him than to Mr. Milltrum. He read in it an answer to his story on the Gemmi Pass. He was confident Miriam was not making this heroic offer for the firm of Milltrum Bros., but from a motive of far greater moment. That she was willing to risk her entire fortune, leaving herself practically penniless, was to him a splendid proof of what a love such as hers really implied. It was surely a daring thing to do. But love is always daring. It disdains the tithing of mint and anise and cumin. Nor does it ever stoop to measure results or weigh consequences. It is the one thing in this world which knows nothing of calculation.

The love that will not give itself with measureless bound is only a pinchbeck, a poor, tawdry imitation, a mockery and a travesty, not even worthy to be dignified by the name of sentiment.

Neither did Miriam consider what the world would say if Milltrum Bros. should be beaten in their fight, and her fortune swept away in consequence. The eyes with which she regarded the world were gloriously fearless, for the light which shone in them came from a heart that had no need of the sun, its courage and innocence being divinely radiant.

"Miss Holbrook is a woman of a thousand," Paul said, quietly, as he returned the letter to Mr. Milltrum.

"A woman of a million, or ten millions, or as many more millions as you care to add on. Most of them can be bought with a trinket, a gewgaw, some bauble, or childish thing."

There were times when Mr. Milltrum remembered bitterly that Victor Carreau had bribed Kate Dumont to an act of treachery.

"What reply shall you make to Miss Holbrook?" Paul asked.

"I will write and accept her offer," Mr. Milltrum said, decidedly.

"You surely don't mean it," Paul replied, with a look of surprise.

"I surely do," and the old gentleman's eyes twinkled merrily.

Paul saw that Mr. Milltrum had some little scheme of his own relating to Miss Holbrook, one in which he seemingly was to have no share, so nothing more was said.

Mr. Milltrum's arrival with Paul from the office interfered with Judith's reception-room programme, still she managed to give the "wanderer," as she smilingly called him, a welcome as earnest and cordial as any one could desire.

"Now, Uncle Lewis," she said, when the dinner had reached a certain stage, "tell me something of your adventures in Switzerland. From what you have said, your Gemmi Pass experience must have been one of rare enjoyment."

"It was; such things ought to be rare, and the rarer they are the better for me. But, Peggy, will you ever forget our coming in on that lunch-party, when Paul was struggling with a sausage sandwich, and Miss Holbrook was jabbering with the professor?"

"What professor?" Judith asked, though her question had another intent.

"A podgy and rather profuse personage, who perspired ponderously," Mr. Milltrum replied, alliteratively, a weakness into which he lapsed at times. "Really, though, Judith, I must beg your pardon for speaking so lightly of the professor. Kindly excuse me."

"Why this overwhelming courtesy? What

have I to do with the podgy professor, that you should be so careful of my feelings?"

In vain Paul tried to catch Mr. Milltrum's eye with a warning glance. Equally vain was his attempt to throw in a diverting question. Mr. Milltrum at times held himself down like a dog following a scent, and would not be led away. So he answered:

"The professor is a relative of yours, or, rather, his wife is, which, I suppose, is the same thing. Didn't Paul tell you?"

"No," she answered, naturally interested to hear of an adventure with which she was connected.

Again Paul looked at Mr. Milltrum, and again Mr. Milltrum refused to see the eyes that so anxiously sought his.

"Paul has been so busy since he got home that probably the matter slipped his mind. Let me tell you all about it."

And he did, naming the place Professor Schuman had spoken of, and the entries that he wished copied from the church register. At first Judith listened with real amusement, for Mr. Milltrum's description of Professor Schuman and his amiable wife was more laughable than definite, but as he gradually worked within the circle of what actually happened, and spoke of the request the professor made to Paul, ending up with the name of the village where the church register was sup-

posed to be, a frightened look came into her face, her eyes filled with horror, the smile died on her lips, and the soft laugh which but a moment before rippled so happily, choked into something like a sob.

But Mr. Milltrum saw nothing of this. All he could see was the professor, whose memory stirred him so pleasantly.

Then he asked the question that Paul had dreaded ever since the subject was mentioned:

"Did you remember those entries for Professor Schuman when you were in New Orleans, Paul?"

"Yes," Paul answered, bravely.

"And you went to the church where they were supposed to be?"

"Yes," Paul replied, as abruptly as before, then, turning to Miss Milltrum, asked her a question, one of no importance in itself, but with the hope of changing the conversation.

But Mr. Milltrum was inexorable. Had he been a lawyer, cross-examining a witness, he could not have shown a keener interest in Paul's movements when in New Orleans and the village to which he had gone for the entries desired by Professor Schuman. Little did he imagine that by his pitiless inquiries he was visiting upon Kate Dumont's daughter a punishment infinitely worse than death. But Judith was brave. There was good blood in her veins, despite its taints here and there. Besides, she had a hope, a substantial

hope, that, though Paul had seen the church register, the marriage record might have been withheld. She therefore listened eagerly to Mr. Milltrum's questions, and Paul's courteous but guarded replies, finally reaching the conclusion that, though Paul had seen Father Auvergne, nothing had been said regarding her marriage. So she began to breathe more freely, her face became less rigid, her eyes lost something of their fear, and, when the conversation took another turn, she entered into it almost as heartily as the others. But all through the evening a vague sense of danger haunted her. She felt as though her feet were on slippery places, and any moment were liable to give way. She smiled at some of Mr. Milltrum's quaint descriptions, and his still quainter comments on both places and persons, but when she thought of Paul's meeting with Father Auvergne her heart became strangely heavy. At times she would glance stealthily at Paul, but his face was impenetrable, nothing in either his look or expression giving her the slightest cue. It was a long, hard evening for Judith, yet she dreaded the hour when the Milltrums would leave, lest their going might leave her alone with Paul.

"You may look for me in the morning," Mr. Milltrum said to Paul, when he was bidding him good-by; "it isn't every day that things are so

lively down your way. I want to see some of the fun."

That was his way of regarding one of the most exciting times Wall Street had ever known. Already a score of fortunes had changed hands, and many more had been wiped out as chalk figures on a blackboard. Raid after raid had been made on strongly placed stocks, compelling some men to hurry in from their country homes, and remain in their offices from morning till night, not a few availing themselves of office chairs and lounges for the brief rest which exhausted nature demanded. It was indeed a battle of the giants. Paul had good reason to say that the new Western combination had apparently plenty of money, and money on the stock-market can do nearly as it pleases. Of course Milltrum Bros. had rivals, keen, daring, and not overscrupulous, who would willingly have seen its colors lowered. On the other hand, the strong, conservative men, who were the real pillars of business, and whose interests in the country were too serious to be lightly regarded, supported Milltrum Bros. without stint.

Paul therefore had command of resources far beyond those held by his immediate firm. Mr. Milltrum's name alone was worth millions. The shrewd, wide-awake Chicagoan had not lived in vain. His integrity had a market value much greater than that of mere securities. Paul also

was held in high regard. He was known as a safe, careful dealer, too wise to be inveigled into foolish kite-flying schemes, and always able to give immediate response to any demands made upon him.

The new combination had therefore a larger contract on its hands than it imagined, but Milltrum Bros. had not escaped scot-free. There was nothing very seriously involved, and Mr. Milltrum's remark that he was coming down to share in the fun indicated fairly his view of the case. Paul, feeling responsible for the Saxby interests, and realizing that they needed special care, after Mr. Milltrum had gone retired to his room, where he worked until long after midnight.

A gentle tap on his door surprised him slightly, and, on opening it, to his much greater surprise he saw Judith.

"Excuse my disturbing you," she said, "but I wanted to see you for a few minutes. May I come in?"

"Certainly," he answered, gathering up the papers on which he had been at work, and wheeling over an easy chair for her.

"I came to talk with you about my letter," she said, with a pitiful little smile, for her lips quivered as she spoke, and she looked very much as when Mr. Milltrum was speaking of Professor Schuman.

"Might it not be better to wait a few days?"

Paul asked, gently, touched by the evident anxiety she manifested. "Some things, you know, have a way of working out of themselves. Then there are other things that require time."

Judith felt that Paul was merely fencing, but his smile was so kindly that she took hope.

"I wrote out of my heart, Paul. That letter was no mere composition. Of course I remember the terms of our marriage. But I cannot hold myself within those terms. I love you, Paul. And I want to share, not merely your home, but your life. I may have been thoughtless and perhaps selfish, but that day has gone. Now I am yours, body and soul, and if you can only give me a hundredth part of the love that I give you, I shall be the happiest woman in New York."

By this time she had risen from her chair, and was facing Paul, who was standing with his hand resting on the table. How he felt for her at that moment! A great pity filled his heart. His first anger had burned itself out, leaving only sorrow in its stead. Father Auvergne's kindly counsels had prevailed, and he had resolved, cost what it would, to hide from Judith his knowledge of her secret. But to meet her newly awakened love with a love of his own was not possible. For love cannot be compelled in the heart of either man or woman. There may be gratitude, or sympathy, or admiration, but these are not love. Love is not a mental product, and cannot be reasoned out, no

matter what advantages may accrue therefrom. Paul understood all this. He was too honest to simulate a passion, though by doing so he could set Judith's heart at rest, and make her life supremely happy. Perhaps she felt this, for she was looking into his face with intense eagerness, but to fail meant for her so much of bitterness and shame that she flung her arms around his neck, and drawing his face down to hers kissed him again and again, nor would she let him go until the perfume of her breath, the love-light in her eyes, the passion of her lips had so overwhelmed Paul that for the moment he forgot everything save the mighty love which now possessed the beautiful woman who for years had seemed so indifferent to his presence.

"Why can't you love me, Paul? But you must. I will not wait any longer. You are mine. And I am going to claim you. O Paul! Paul!" And again she lavished caresses upon him, her arms clinging around his neck with a strength which seemed exhaustless.

"Judith," he whispered, hoarsely, "please restrain yourself. It is very late. I have a trying day to-morrow. We can talk about these things at another time —"

"No, Paul, now. You must love me. I will not be denied. Surely I am not so dull and unattractive that you can see nothing in me worthy of your love."

Then she drew back and faced him once more, her splendid beauty so revealing itself that she seemed like the goddess of a poet's dream. Never was man more strongly tempted. Why not forget that fatal entry in the church register? Why not forget that she had once been the wife of Bothwell? Why allow the memory of the dead Miriam to throw its shadow upon his path? Why should the image of a living Miriam haunt him so constantly? Here was a woman who loved him with a passion which had broken her pride so utterly that not even a vestige remained. And this woman was his wife, and was actually suing for a love to which she had every right!

Then all at once there rose before him the scene in the sacristy, and he saw the finger of Father Auvergne point to the record made by his own hand. He drew back, his face hardened, a stern expression gathered around his mouth, and he moved to another part of the room, leaving Judith standing near his vacant chair. Then she understood in some mysterious way, though Paul gave her no hint or sign that he had seen the record of her marriage, and that in so deceiving him she had sinned beyond all hope of forgiveness. Perhaps if she had told him the nature of Bothwell's hold upon her father, and the price he demanded for her father's liberty, and if she had frankly made a full confession of her own weakness in yielding to Bothwell's desires, Paul might

so far have condoned her folly as to let the secret remain untold. But after imperiously demanding all the love that a wife could claim, and enforcing that demand with the full stress and passion of which she was capable, to tell a story, such as hers would have to be, was impossible. She stood for a few moments in silence, then with the bearing of an empress bade Paul good night and returned to her own room.

XI.

JUDITH'S ATONEMENT

THE day following Judith's pathetic interview with Paul, the hall servant in the Bedford mansion experienced a serious mental disturbance, for in his august presence, unabashed and immovable, stood a person whose like he had never seen before. Yoba was his visitor who had come with a letter for Mrs. Bedford.

Jeames offered to take this letter, to which Yoba demurred, whereupon Jeames waxed wroth and intimated that Yoba would do well to retire. Yoba, not being of a retiring mind, smiled calmly in the face of the great man under whose care the Bedford mansion enjoyed such peace. This was intolerable. It meant a defiance of authority, an utter disregard of the supreme laws through which hall servants exercise their sovereignty. With the bearing of an Oriental monarch Jeames moved toward Yoba, confident of his immediate submission, but in the country which gave Yoba to a waiting world, hall servants, however gorgeously attired, had no distinct place. The wrath

of the Bedford potentate, therefore, failed of any effect other than a deep opulent smile. This infuriated Jeames, who, forgetful of the splendid dignities inhering to such an office as his, purpled with anger.

"Get out!" he shouted. "And be quick about it," and while speaking caught Yoba by the arm as though he would lead him to the door.

To his amazement, Yoba didn't move. Had he been a bronze statue weighing half a ton he could not have stood more fixed and solid. Jeames now began to feel decidedly uncomfortable. He had reached the end of his special resources and accomplished nothing. Nothing remained but to call for assistance, something he had not done since entering the Bedford household. Accordingly he touched an electric button, an emergency affair with which certain Gotham mansions are provided, and soon a stalwart footman appeared in the hall.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

His clothes were American, his accent Irish.

"This sawed-off nigger has a letter for Mrs. Bedford, and he will neither give it to me nor get out."

Jeames was assuredly very angry, or such an expression as "sawed-off nigger" would never have fallen from his immaculate lips.

"What does he say?"

"I can't get him to say anything."

"Hasn't he a tongue?"

"I should say not."

"Perhaps he has a lingo of his own."

"Try him and find out."

The suave Hibernian approached the smiling Yoba, but the interview was not satisfactory. Then Michael looked at Jeames, and Jeames looked at Michael, Yoba meanwhile looking at them both. What might have happened it would be difficult to say, for wrath was beginning to stir the Milesian blood, and the Hibernian who does not love a scrimmage has yet to be born, when fortunately Judith came into the hall. Seeing Yoba, she staggered and a great fear took possession of her. When Yoba saw her, he pushed past the footman and hall servant and gave her the letter he held in his hand. Then he almost rushed for the door, both of the servants looking after him in amazement. With a face from which everything of blood had departed, Judith went into the library and opened the mysterious letter. For a time her eyes refused obedience to her will. All she could see was a sheet of paper upon which tracings of ink were visible. Her hands also were in rebellion, for they caused the paper to tremble so violently that to read it was impossible. But nerving herself by a supreme effort she spread the letter on the table at which she was standing, and gradually its meaning broke upon her mind.

"My dear Judith," it said. "Kindly arrange to meet me this afternoon at the Sembrada. Mr. Neumarck, as you are aware, has apartments there, and if you can find time to call on him he will be very glad. There is no need of going into particulars now except to suggest that nothing, I trust, will detain you from this appointment. Suppose I say four o'clock. If I do not see you then I shall do myself the great pleasure of calling on Mr. Paul Bedford this evening.

"GERALD."

Poor Judith! Did ever woman receive such a staggering blow? Only the night before had she pleaded with Paul Bedford for the love a wife should have from her husband. Now she learned that her claim was valueless, that she had not even a right to his name, and that the husband of former years had returned from death to demand her immediate presence. It seemed like some horrible dream. She could not imagine such a thing possible. The letter must be a cruel forgery. Gerald Bothwell was on the Portland steamer when it was wrecked off the eastern coast. Had she not made the most searching inquiries, and been given the most definite proof? But who sent Yoba with this letter, and how did the writer know of her acquaintance with Mr. Neumarck, or of her visit to his apartments at

the Sembrada? Either a fearful conspiracy was being planned, the object undoubtedly to purchase her silence, or — Then she shuddered.

She had ordered the carriage for eleven, intending to do some shopping and lunching afterward with Mrs. Helmsley, but she remained in her room, one moment looking at the letter with eyes full of horror, and the next sobbing as if her heart were breaking. What hours these were! Each one seemed an age in itself. The dainty little clock, one of Paul's gifts from Paris, chimed sweetly, but to Judith it seemed as a prison bell tolling the knell of some poor wretch who on the morrow must face the awful mystery of death.

As the afternoon came on callers presented themselves at the Bedford mansion, but the solemn "Not at home" of Jeames was the invariable reply.

At three o'clock, in the plainest of walking costumes and heavily veiled, Judith set out for the Sembrada.

How well she remembered her former visit and her interview with Mr. Neumarck! At that time she was on a very different errand. She had recovered from the shock occasioned by Bothwell's death, and was beginning to rejoice in her freedom. To deal fairly by Judith, it is only just to say that when she heard of Bothwell being a passenger on the ill-fated steamer, she was greatly distressed. For a time she really

sorrowed. Her sympathies were touched, and her memory of Bothwell had in it a goodly measure of tenderness. She even resented the successful issue of Mr. Milltrum's railroad scheme, and there were days when her heart was full of bitterness. But she had never loved Bothwell. His influence over her at times was very strong, almost mesmeric, dominating her most strangely, but her marriage was not the result of either affection or desire, a yielding rather to her father's urgent plea. There was, however, an element of adventure in the secrecy and mystery of the proceeding which appealed to her. At heart Judith was an intriguante. The French strain in her blood, combined with tendencies inherited from her mother, gave a certain piquancy to her relations with Bothwell, and there were times when she looked forward to a dramatic climax in which she would have a prominent part. But when it was known that Bothwell had taken passage for Portland, and that there was no possible doubt as to his death, she immediately saw an easy escape from all embarrassment. With a feeling, therefore, of comparative gladness she went to the Sembrada, hoping to find the jewel-casket containing the certificate bearing Father Auvergne's signature. She had a notion, by no means uncommon, that with the destruction of the certificate all positive evidence of her marriage would be removed.

Thinking over these things and recalling every detail of her interview with Mr. Neumarck, she remembered the keen, suspicious way in which he had questioned her respecting Bothwell. How inscrutable his face! How mysterious his smile! How full of mockery his words! Was it possible that he knew anything of Bothwell? Why then had he not told her? What was his motive in such outrageous deception?

With a heavy heart, and a mind full of baffling questions, Judith reached the Sembrada, and ere long was shown to Mr. Neumarck's apartment. He was sitting in his wheeled chair, just as she had seen him before, the years only adding to the ferret sharpness of his eyes and the mocking smile of his thin, cruel lips.

"Can you tell me the meaning of this letter?" Judith asked, with a touch of imperiousness, her splendid beauty enhanced by the excitement under which she labored.

"Some letters explain themselves," he answered, taking the letter from her hand, "others require an interpreter."

There was something so suggestive in Mr. Neumarck's manner, that Judith instantly suspected him of knowing more about the letter than he pretended.

"You remember my calling here soon after Mr. Bothwell's death?" The look Judith gave Mr. Neumarck was earnest and searching.

"My memory is tolerably good," he sneeringly replied.

"Had you any reason to believe at that time that Mr. Bothwell was not a passenger on the Portland boat?"

Again Judith's eyes searched the face of Mr. Neumarck, but a child might just as well have tried to decipher an Egyptian monolith.

"This is not a court-room, Mrs. Bedford," and the thin lips curled slightly.

"I am aware of that. But if you knew that Mr. Bothwell had not sailed on that boat, and instead of being drowned, as we all supposed, was living somewhere in the West, why didn't you tell me?"

"How was I to know that you had any special interest in Mr. Bothwell? You merely hinted at some kind of a friendship, and your chief concern, as I remember our interview, was the jewel-casket Bothwell had placed in my keeping."

"You knew nothing then of my relations with Mr. Bothwell?"

"Am I a witness in the hands of a lawyer?"

"You may evade my questions in any way you please. Such seems to be your intent. But if you wilfully withheld from me the fact of Mr. Bothwell being alive at that time, you were guilty of a foul, contemptible deception, one which allowed me to contract an unlawful marriage."

"Do I need to tell you again, Mrs. Bedford,

that you never once intimated that you were Mr. Bothwell's wife? Why didn't you inform me of that very interesting fact? I might have been of service to you, which would have given me great pleasure."

Mr. Neumarck accompanied his words with a mocking gesture.

"Do you know anything of Mr. Bothwell, or of that letter in your hands?"

Judith was now standing close to Mr. Neumarck's chair, her eyes flashing, and her face blazing with anger.

"Double-headed questions, Mrs. Bedford, are always troublesome. But" — touching the bell on the table as he spoke — "I will answer them in my own way."

The bell was answered with singular promptness, when Mr. Neumarck said to the servant:

"Tell Mr. Simlick I wish to see him."

"Simlick," Judith questioned herself. "Where have I heard that name? It seems familiar."

Then as a lightning-flash illumines the night, revealing skies and mountains hidden in the darkness, so in a moment she was back in Nevada, once more seeing the mysterious Yoba at the car window with a letter from Mr. Simlick for Paul. Another flash brought back her terror at that time, the agony she endured lest the Simlick spoken of might be none other than Gerald Bothwell. A terrible fear now came upon her. Filled

with a nameless dread, her eyes followed the servant as he left the room, nor were they withdrawn from the door until it opened again and Mr. Simlick entered the parlor. At first her heart gave a great bound of relief, for there was little in his appearance to recall Gerald Bothwell.

"This is Mrs. Bedford, who has come to make certain inquiries regarding a letter she received this morning. Perhaps you can enlighten her, Mr. Simlick."

Mr. Neumarck's face was almost diabolical in its expression, and his small, piercing eyes gleamed maliciously.

For a moment Mr. Simlick silently regarded Judith, then crossing the room to where a table stood in the semi-darkness, he removed his false bushy whiskers and blue spectacles, and in an instant revealed himself as Gerald Bothwell.

"Gerald!" Judith gasped.

"Judith," he answered, quietly.

Then she dropped into a chair and looked at him tremblingly.

"Permit me to retire, Mrs. Bedford. Mr. Simlick, I have no doubt, can answer your further inquiries regarding Mr. Bothwell," Mr. Neumarck said, as he wheeled his chair into the next room. Then a servant closed the folding doors, leaving Judith alone with Bothwell.

"I assume you received my note," he said as he stood looking down at Judith, who sat almost

helpless in her chair. "It was kind of you to answer it in person. But I expected you would do so."

"Gerald, why did you ever consent to such a deception? See what it has led to. Are you aware that I am married to Paul Bedford?"

Judith could hardly speak above a whisper, and each word was gasped out with manifest difficulty.

"Yes, married to him, but not his wife. That honor is mine, Judith. Father Auvergne yet lives. The church register remains. And I have returned to claim the proud privilege of being your husband."

There was an expression on Bothwell's face that caused Judith to shiver from head to foot.

"The welcome you have given me is not all I might reasonably expect after these years of separation, but in time, Judith, you will doubtless restore me to my former place in your heart."

This time Bothwell smiled, but it was a cruel, pitiless smile.

Then Judith leaped to her feet. Her moment of weakness was past. To be taunted in this way goaded her to a passion bordering on fury.

"Gerald Bothwell," she said, fearlessly, meeting his startled look, "when I married Paul Bedford there was no doubt in my mind but you had been a passenger on the Portland boat. You sent me no word. You gave me no hint. You made no sign. For all these years you have

been as one dead. Now you return and demand that I come back to you, insisting that I leave the man whose name I bear, and whom I love with all my heart. Yes, you may well wince, and scowl, and clench your hand. But these things have no effect on me, Gerald Bothwell. I have only another word to say — the courts may annul my marriage with Paul Bedford and compel me to assume your name. Of that, however, I am not certain, but one thing I am certain of, all the courts on God's earth will not compel me to return to you."

"Don't speak so positively, Judith. You may have to change your mind."

"I will never change my heart. You have played the part of a coward, a poltroon, and no woman with a drop of decent blood in her veins would acknowledge you as her husband. You are mean enough to denounce me to Paul Bedford. Perhaps you have already done that. You certainly implied as much in this letter. But I defy you. From this hour I renounce you. I hope never to see your face again. Now do your worst."

Judith spoke with a passion that gave to each word the force of a bullet.

Never had Bothwell seen her so aroused, or so gloriously handsome as at this moment. She had the bearing of a queen. Her face was worthy of a Greek goddess. When Bothwell

entered the room his heart was burning with a desire for revenge, but as he looked at Judith in her superb beauty, a wild, fierce passion swept over him as a mighty wave from a fathomless sea. Then he said:

"Judith, forgive me! I deserve everything you have said. But the police were on my track. Everything was against me. I was simply desperate. Watching my chance, I went West, intending to send for you at the first opportunity. Before that time came you had married Bedford. Then I swore an oath of revenge. In fulfilment of that oath I came East, determined to bankrupt his business, break up his home, perhaps take his life. But, Judith, if you will consent to be my wife, I will forego everything. We can go away somewhere, and begin all over again. I am rich, richer possibly than Bedford. You can have anything and everything you please. Just say the word, and I will take all the legal steps necessary. I mean this, Judith, and if you accept my offer, you will never regret it."

As Bothwell spoke, his face lost everything of harshness, and he seemed as the lover of bygone years. Approaching Judith, he bent over her with a tender, appealing look, and would fain have taken her hands in his.

"It is too late, Gerald," and there was a sadness in her voice, which made it even more impressive than her former passionate speech.

"Your time to speak was long ago. You may be rich, but there are some things money cannot buy. I did not always think so, but I know better now. You are too late."

"Don't say that, Judith."

"Yes, Gerald, I must say it."

"Remember what this means to Paul Bedford. I have sworn —"

"Your oaths are of little consequence to Paul Bedford. You cannot harm him, Gerald. But I spoke angrily a moment since. Forgive me. I do not wish our last interview to have such a memory. You are free, Gerald, to take whatever steps you wish. I will not oppose you in anything. Arrange matters as may seem best. Now I must be going. Good-by," and before Bothwell could interfere, Judith had gone out, hurried to the elevator, and in a few minutes had left the Sembrada.

On reaching home, Judith went to her room, where she spent a few minutes at her desk, tying up and arranging some papers. Then, taking a photograph of Paul which stood on her dressing-table, she kissed it passionately again and again. Her face was deadly pale, and, as she looked at the photograph, her eyes burned strangely. Outwardly, she seemed calm, very unlike the passionate, imperious Judith, who only an hour before had defied Bothwell in words hotter than lava from the heart of a burning mountain. And

that calmness remained, for, when the maid went to Mrs. Bedford's dressing-room to arrange her dinner toilet, Judith was found on her couch in a deep, dreamless sleep, her beautiful face invested with a peace only possible to those who have passed through the gates of death.

XII.

THE COMBINATION ENDS

THANKS to the kindly offices of Doctor Barrington, who immediately responded to Paul's message, a formal inquest was avoided. Certain inquiries were inevitable, but everything was so arranged that few suspected the cause of Judith's death. Even the newspapers, always so eager for details, and often brutally indifferent about intruding on private matters, were baffled by the course of Doctor Barrington. They all gave generous space to the announcement, which was only natural, for Mrs. Bedford had been very prominent in the social life of the city, but there was not a hint as to the actual facts in the case. Judith's deep sleep, therefore, was not disturbed.

When Gerald Bothwell saw the startling paragraphs in the morning paper, he was certain that some terrible mistake had been made. It could not possibly be true. Judith dead! Only a few hours before he had met her at the Sembrada, when her beauty was never more enthralling, and when life in glorious effulgence flashed

from her eyes and throbbed in her veins! Some silly reporter had brought about a confusion of names. No other explanation was possible. But when he looked through the other papers and saw the same announcement, a sense of awful dread came upon him. Calling Yoba, he sent him to the Bedford mansion, and when Yoba returned, doubt was no longer possible.

Then a great rage took possession of Bothwell. He walked up and down his room as one demented. He raved like a madman. His eyes had a wild, dangerous glare, and there was a look on his face from which most men would shrink, for it meant that he was in an ugly mood, and would brook no trifling. Yoba, who had often seen his master in fierce anger, for the first time quailed before him, so fearful was the passion under which he labored. Judith's glorious beauty, as he had seen her the day before, came upon him as a vision. He remembered how proudly she had borne herself in that strange interview, when he had suddenly appeared as one from the dead. He could see her rising from her chair, and with the mien of an outraged empress denounce him for his cowardice, and with unutterable scorn refuse his tardy offers of reparation.

Then he remembered the infinite pathos with which she said:

"It is too late, Gerald, too late, too late!"

He felt now that her anger was justified, and that the part he had played was despicable. How easily he could have let her know of his escape! With Yoba ever ready to do his will, and upon whose fidelity he could always rely, why had he not communicated with her? To carry out his own selfish ends, he had left her alone, and for more than three years had not given her even a hint that he was alive. The shame of it, the cruelty of it, the perfidy of it, now filled him with horror. He thought of his letter summoning her to the Sembrada, cold, curt, threatening, and of all that his demands implied, — a surrender of Paul Bedford's name, an exposure of the secret she had guarded with such care, a withdrawal from the position to which she had attained, and her immediate expulsion from the circles to which her beauty and wealth had given her such generous welcome. Without a word of warning, as lightning from a cloudless sky, all this humiliation had come upon her, and it was his work, the man with whom she had once exchanged marriage vows! Now she was dead, dead in the house of Paul Bedford, while he would not be permitted to look upon her face.

But there are times when repentance is unavailing, when the most bitter regrets are valueless, and when sorrow, however deep, fails to accomplish any good. At such times, remorse only leads to recklessness, and men forget every-

thing except their own guilt and shame. Then they become hopeless, and their despair assumes a form of frenzy.

While Bothwell was in this condition, Mr. Neumarck came into his room, and, with a sneer, said:

“That lovers’ quarrel of yours has turned out seriously. Judith evidently preferred the other man. Which shall I offer you — sympathy or congratulations?”

If Mr. Neumarck had given Bothwell even a casual glance, he would not have spoken in this fashion. For once his sharp ferret eyes failed in their duty.

“You are the cause of all this,” Bothwell retorted, fiercely, glaring at Mr. Neumarck with the eyes of a maniac.

“In what way am I responsible? You have a habit, Mr. Bothwell, of allowing other men to carry your burdens. In this instance, I refuse to accommodate you.”

The cool, mocking tone of Mr. Neumarck was simply maddening.

“Had it not been for you, this would not have happened,” Bothwell said more fiercely than before, taking up the newspaper from the table, and pointing with trembling finger to an announcement of Judith’s death.

“Did I remain in Nevada for three years, and allow my wife to become the bride of our mutual

friend, Mr. Paul Bedford? Did I write to Mrs. Paul Bedford, inviting her to call at the Sembrada? Did I propose to her that we quietly ignore the incident of her second marriage, and resume the blissful relations of former years? My dear Mr. Bothwell, reserve your wrath for some one else. It is a pity to waste it on me."

While speaking, Mr. Neumarck's sharp, glittering eyes had in them a gleam of contempt.

"Damn you for an old rascal!" Bothwell exclaimed, now goaded to desperation. "Who was it that fitted out the *Vampire*, and induced Carreau to go with me into the smuggling business, and then held a noose over our heads because of the revenue officer who was drowned? Who was it, when you were running Cranburg's, because I was in your toils, compelled me to act as a decoy? And when I was in Nevada, and wrote you that I was coming home, you, you, refused your permission, and I had to stay. Only for you, Judith would now be living. She would have come to me in Nevada. You are a cold-blooded scoundrel. Another word, and I'll wring your crooked old neck."

Mr. Neumarck was no coward. There 'had often been desperate hazards in his life, but no man had ever seen him show signs of fear. More than once he had looked death in the face, when the least weakness would have been fatal, yet his courage never failed him. He was utterly heart-

less, knew nothing of pity or tenderness, followed with unrelenting hate those who crossed his path, but he was no craven. He therefore met Bothwell's angry glare with a cool, steady look, his long, clawlike fingers, meantime, toying with a revolver in his pocket.

"Do not try any of your tricks on me, Mr. Bothwell. You are merely a coarse, vulgar brute, and I'm not surprised that Judith —"

Blinded with passion, Bothwell leaped at the chair in which Mr. Neumarck was sitting, and in another instant would have caught him by the throat, when Neumarck gave a sudden turn to the chair, causing Bothwell to miss it, and stagger almost to the floor. Quick as a flash, Neumarck drew his revolver and fired, the bullet piercing Bothwell's heart, and killing him instantly. Yoba, who had been standing near the door all this time, seeing Bothwell reel and fall, with the spring of an infuriated panther, and uttering a strange, unearthly cry, leaped upon Neumarck. The attack was so sudden, so ferocious, that Neumarck's revolver was useless, and he was powerless in Yoba's terrible grasp.

In such a hotel as the Sembrada, a pistol-shot aroused immediate confusion among the several guests, a number of whom, locating the report, rushed to Neumarck's apartment, and were thus in time to save the unfortunate man from being strangled.

On the floor lay the body of Bothwell, while at the end of the room, pinioned to the floor by the infuriated Yoba, his face blue, his eyes bulging under the death-grip upon his throat, was Neumarck.

With difficulty Yoba was torn off, and held by the hotel servants until he became quieter. Neumarck, quite insensible, was carried to his chamber, and laid upon his bed, where he was guarded until the police could be summoned.

Upon Neumarck's departure from the room, Yoba, looking around with a half-terrified and dazed expression, suddenly caught sight of his master, and, with a weird cry, sat upon the floor at Bothwell's side, and, taking the head upon his knees, smoothed the face tenderly with his hands, and spoke to it in his own strange way.

He gave no heed to the crowd as they pushed and jostled, other than bend his face so far down over that of Bothwell as to protect it from the vulgar gaze of those who had forced their way into the apartment.

When the police came to make an examination of the apartment and gather such evidence as would be essential at the inquest, they experienced much difficulty with Yoba. He would not allow them to touch the body of Bothwell. When they desired to place it on a lounge, where the doctor might discover the cause of death, he fought with the strength of a madman. Finally,

the hotel clerk, who more than once had befriended Yoba, prevailed upon him to allow the corpse to be carried to Bothwell's room, and laid upon his bed. No sooner was this done than he placed himself as sentinel, where he watched with increasing vigilance, not leaving the room day or night. At first the authorities thought of arresting Yoba, and for a time he was under police surveillance, but the confession of Neumarck, upon gaining consciousness some days later at the hospital, put matters in a clear light. Mr. Milltrum's earnest advocacy of Yoba's cause undoubtedly helped to secure his release, for he, though deeply shocked by the sudden death of Judith, hastened to the Sembrada when he saw in the papers an account of Yoba's singular devotion to his late master, who was spoken of as Simlick, a Western mine owner. The moment Yoba saw Mr. Milltrum he gave him a look of grateful recognition, then taking his hand, placed it on his head, just as he had done three years before in Nevada, after which he made other signs expressive of gratitude and devotion.

"I will be responsible for this man," Mr. Milltrum said to the coroner. "You can trust him with me. I met him out West, some years ago, where he rendered me a great service. If bail is required, I will furnish whatever is necessary."

"The evidence all points to Neumarck as the murderer, and so far there is no criminal charge

against Yoba," the coroner answered, looking at him as he spoke, "but the circumstances are so peculiar that I would like to have him bonded in some way."

"Just as you please. If my bond is not sufficient —"

"Yours is ample, Mr. Milltrum. The clerk will make out the papers."

Yoba remained in the Sembrada, keeping his strange vigil, the solitary watcher at Bothwell's bier, and the only mourner who followed his body to the cemetery, after which he went to the house of Mr. Milltrum, where he remained.

How pitiless is fate! How implacable is destiny! With what remorselessness the iron wheels fit into each other! If Bothwell and Neumarch must needs have a fatal quarrel, why should it have been so delayed? A day earlier would have saved Judith. For Paul, at whatever cost to himself, had resolved to guard her secret. He knew that their relations never could be anything but formal, and, though bearing his name, she would have no place in his heart. After a fearful struggle, one that taxed every fibre of his being, he had sworn himself to secrecy. If these men, therefore, had fought before Judith had been imperiously summoned to the Sembrada, her life would not have gone out in such utter darkness.

Knowing of Judith's intense love for the South,

and realizing that she had no claim on the little cemetery at Pelham, Paul arranged for her burial in the churchyard of St. John's, beside the graves of her father and mother.

Father Auvergne met the little company at the railway station, and, with a voice tremulous with deep emotion, performed the last rites of the church.

"I kept her secret," Paul said to the aged priest, as they turned away from the grave now covered with flowers, leaving Mr. Milltrum standing with bowed and uncovered head at the tomb of Kate Carreau.

"And God will reward you, my son," Father Auvergne answered, softly. "He always rewards those who bear the cross in His name. Does Mr. Milltrum suspect anything?"

"No."

"Nor any one else?" glancing for a moment at the Misses Milltrum, who were giving a final touch to the flowers on Judith's grave.

"No."

"Then, Mr. Bedford, as we have buried Judith in this quiet spot where she sleeps in a holy peace, let us also bury the secret of her early life. Poor Judith!"

For reply, Paul held out his hand, which Father Auvergne clasped silently, and, as each man looked into the other's face, both felt that a covenant had been made which only death could annul.

XIII.

CONCLUSION

TRUE to his promise, Mr. Milltrum accepted Miriam Holbrook's generous offer, though she little imagined his purpose in doing so. For that matter, he was equally in the dark so far as understanding her motive in making such a proposition. That a young woman, because of a chance rumor affecting the credit of Milltrum Bros., should voluntarily place her fortune at his disposal, seemed to Mr. Milltrum a remarkable proceeding. He determined to give Miss Holbrook some proof of his appreciation of her kindness, and as a consequence had various chucklings with himself, not even sharing them with Paul Bedford. Mr. Milltrum did not tell Miriam that the mysterious combination, which threatened such dire results to the firm bearing his name, had collapsed in the most extraordinary way, the principals disappearing as creatures of a dream. Neither did he say that Milltrum Bros. had not only weathered the storm, nor that Paul, by taking advantage of the stress into

which some men were driven, was able to regain all that had been lost, with a handsome profit as well, besides placing the Saxby interests beyond all risk. Of these things the artful Mr. Milltrum said not a word. Yet he saw Miss Holbrook quite often. Indeed, he went to her house so frequently that Mrs. Holbrook sometimes laughed at Miriam and her conquest of the cheery old Westerner.

"We came out ahead to-day," he whispered to Miriam one afternoon as she handed him a cup of tea.

"I am so glad," she whispered in return.

"I think the worst is over," he said, knowingly, helping himself to an extra lump of sugar.

Miriam's face brightened, and she smiled at him gratefully.

As a blessed old humbug, Mr. Milltrum had few equals. That very day Paul had made what some men would call a fortune!

So it went on for several weeks, Mr. Milltrum making his reports to Miriam with the gravity of a Chinese mandarin, she listening with unabated eagerness. Miriam began at length to feel that she was actually a sort of partner in the firm of Milltrum Bros., an associate with Paul Bedford! To think of this gave her singular pleasure. She therefore looked forward to Mr. Milltrum's visits, entering earnestly into the conversation. One day, much to her disap-

pointment, he returned the securities she had placed at his disposal, thanking her earnestly for the service they had rendered. With the papers was a little package, which he said was part interest on her loan. When he had gone, she opened the package and found a diamond necklace, more rich and beautiful than anything she had ever seen. Putting it aside carefully, not even showing the jewels to her mother, she waited for Mr. Milltrum's next visit.

"I cannot possibly accept such a costly gift," she said, earnestly. "Besides, Mr. Milltrum, this looks like payment, and you know I never thought of such a thing."

"Payment! Nonsense, sheer nonsense, Miss Holbrook! One day, during the flurry, I took what we call a 'little flier,' used some of your money, or its equivalent, which with us is the same thing. Paul managed the business so that we came out on the right side. Then I took the liberty of investing your share in these trinkets, thinking you would prefer them to plain money."

Mr. Milltrum was justified in saying that he had taken a "little flier." He had taken several. "Little fliers" were a pastime of his, and he would sometimes get more actual fun out of them than from larger investments. But how he came to say that he had used Miriam's money is a financial mystery. For Miriam's securities never once left the private safe in Paul Bed-

ford's office from the day they were first put there until they were returned to her by Mr. Milltrum!

"Your assistance was most timely, Miss Holbrook. It was exceedingly kind of you. We had many offers of help during this trouble, but none was more gratefully received than yours."

In saying this, Mr. Milltrum gave Miriam the feeling that she had helped to save Milltrum Bros. from bankruptcy!

"You mean to say that my trifling help was worth all this?" she asked, as she looked at the diamonds glittering in her hand.

"Worth a great deal more. Paul said so when I gave him your letter. You can keep the trinket with a clear conscience."

And she did, though never wearing it, at least not for some time, outside of her own room. But she frequently put it on there, and a glad light would shine in her eyes when she remembered that the jewels were the result of her partnership with Paul.

When Mr. and Mrs. Saxby returned from Europe, Mrs. Saxby was most urgent in her desire that Paul should make his home in Pelham, pleading that as he was now alone and had no home ties in New York, he could do this without inconvenience to himself. So he went back to the place where he had first met Miriam, and her memory seemed even more grateful than ever.

Mrs. Saxby, greatly to Doctor Barrington's surprise, most vividly recalled her strange experience at Interlaken, and questioned him again and again with regard to that evening when she was so startled by what seemed an apparition. The doctor frankly admitted his own feeling when Miss Holbrook came down that same evening from her room to speak with Paul on the hotel piazza. But he had no explanation to offer, confessing that the likeness was so extraordinary that the one would anywhere be taken for the other. Had Doctor Barrington known that the two Miriams were born on the same day, and that the resemblance in disposition and character was fully as definite as that of form and feature, he would have been even more perplexed.

In the spring, Paul having urgent business in London, which was likely to detain him there for some months, suggested that the Milltrums take a house with him in Portman Square.

"On two conditions," Mr. Milltrum answered, "that Maud give up duke hunting, and Peggy solemnly promise not to drag me up the Gemmi. I am willing that Maud should marry, but I draw the line at dukes. I might consent to an earl, or even a marquis, but a duke never."

"He was once mistaken for a duke, you remember, Paul, in Switzerland, and since then to mention one in his presence is like a red rag to a bull," Maud laughingly retorted.

“Portman Square is swarming with dukes, and who knows but even Peggy may become a duchess.”

“I remember very distinctly your honoring me with a title, and for a whole evening addressing me as ‘My lord.’ Have you forgotten?”

“No, Peggy, I haven’t. Nor am I likely to. You remind me of it often enough, goodness knows.”

“Bert Vernon has given me a dress rehearsal of that performance,” Paul said. “I wish —”

“That Bert Vernon was in Jericho. I didn’t grimace and smirk one-fiftieth part of his performance of the show.”

“Eighteen times in three minutes you ‘My lorded’ me,” Peggy interjected. “I kept count. And you boast of being descended from the Pilgrim Fathers! Would you believe it, Paul, he carries a bit of Plymouth Rock in his vest-pocket. But at Cranburg’s —”

“A man allowed a designing woman to muddle his wits, a sin for which he has had to do all kinds of penance, and of which he is often painfully reminded,” retorted Mr. Milltrum, adding, “Paul, unless you covenant and agree to restrain Peggy from wanderings on the Gemmi, nothing will induce me to go with you.”

They went to London, remaining there until September, though Paul left them for a couple of weeks in August. Had he been followed by

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any one careful to mark his doings, he might have been seen in the American Chapel one Sunday morning, the only Sunday he spent in Paris; and then, a few days later, he went over the Gemmi Pass, remaining all night at the little hospice near the summit, actually sitting in the crow's nest, where he had once sat with Miriam Holbrook!

But no one followed him, so his doings were not known to the Milltrums.

Mrs. Saxby, through some mutual friends, easily made the acquaintance of the Holbrooks, and, during Paul's absence, invited Miriam to Pelham. At first Mrs. Saxby was more nervous and disturbed than she seemed, and at times regretted the presence of her guest. But in a few days this feeling wore away. Then she found her heart going out most strangely to the new Miriam. She would listen for her voice as a mother for that of her child. She watched her every movement with rare delight. When Miriam, at the table, or in the library, would indulge in some pleasantry, or turn aside gracefully a chance remark of Mr. Saxby, Mrs. Saxby would look at her as though seeing and hearing again the Miriam of years before. Mr. Saxby was equally impressed, and long ere Miriam's visit had closed the iron doors of his heart were reopened, and she had entered to take a daughter's place.

After she had gone, the house seemed very lonely and desolate, so much so that Mr. and Mrs. Saxby went to Newport for the rest of the summer. In the fall they prevailed upon Miriam to spend a few days with them at Pelham, when the autumnal foliage was in its glory and the September skies were rich in light and beauty.

She was standing on the broad steps one evening, watching with glowing face a sunset of marvellous brilliance, when she heard the sound of carriage wheels coming up the gravelled driveway, and in another moment Paul Bedford sprang from the carriage, and was at her side.

"Miriam!" he said, in a whisper, looking eagerly into her shining eyes.

"Paul!" she answered, with a smile that filled his heart to overflowing. Then he kissed her, and in that kiss he found the Miriam he had lost, and she found the Paul for whom her soul had hungered.

THE END.

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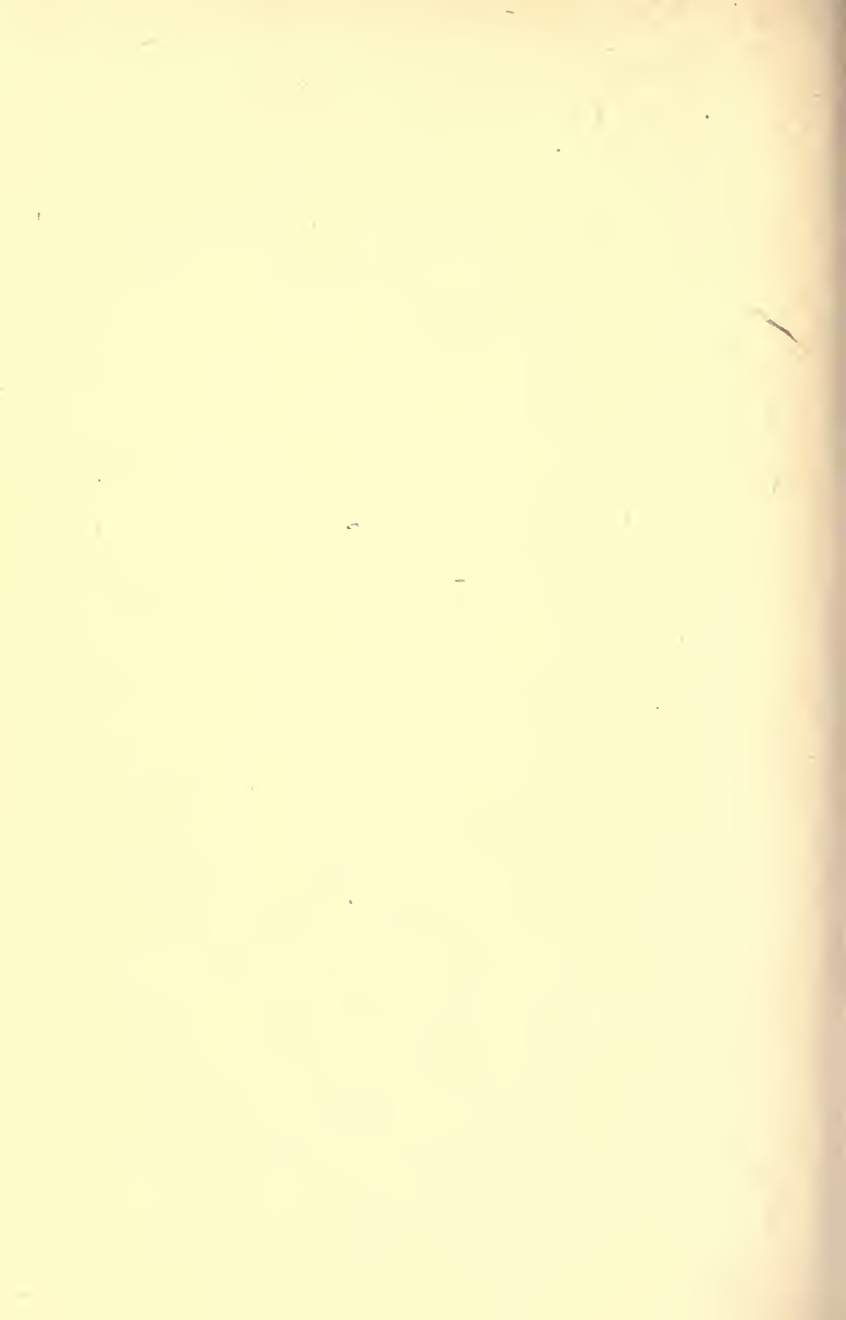
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